

U.S. Secretary of State tells Australia that Julian Assange is accused of very serious crimes



Observers point out that Julian Assange is an Australian citizen and does not share dual U.S. citizenship. Furthermore, it is noted, Assange did not commit any crime on U.S. territory, since he was not in the United States when the information he revealed -- proving that Washington has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity -- was published by a number of international media sources, including The Guardian and The New York Times, Der Spiegel and Le Monde.

Canberra, July 29 (RHC)-- U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Saturday pushed back against Australian demands for an end to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's prosecution, saying the Australian citizen was accused of "very serious criminal conduct" in publishing a trove of classified documents more than a decade ago.

Australia's center-left Labor Party government has been arguing since winning the elections last year that the United States should end its pursuit of the 52-year-old, who has spent four years in a British prison fighting extradition to the United States.

Assange's freedom is widely seen as a test of Australia's leverage with President Joe Biden's administration.

Blinken confirmed on Saturday that Assange had been discussed in annual talks with Foreign Minister Penny Wong in Brisbane, Australia. "I understand the concerns and views of Australians. I think it's very important that our friends here understand our concerns about this matter," Blinken told reporters.

"Mr. Assange was charged with very serious criminal conduct in the United States in connection with his alleged role in one of the largest compromises of classified information in the history of our country," he added.

Wong said Assange's prosecution had "dragged for too long" and that Australia wanted the charges "brought to a conclusion." Australia remains ambiguous about whether the United States should drop the prosecution or strike a plea bargain.

Assange faces 17 charges of espionage and one charge of computer misuse over WikiLeaks' publication of hundreds of thousands of classified diplomatic and military documents in 2010.

American prosecutors allege he helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal classified diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks later published, putting lives at risk.

Australia argues there is a "disconnect" between the U.S. treatment of Assange and Manning. Then-U.S. President Barack Obama commuted Manning's 35-year sentence to seven years, which allowed her release in 2017.

The charges of treason against someone who is not a U.S. citizen are inconsistent with international law.

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