

Australian prime minister calls for release of Julian Assange after UK high court allows appeal



Canberra, May 21 (RHC)-- Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has demanded an end to Julian Assange's imprisonment, as his extradition from a London prison to the United States was temporarily put on hold.

Albanese reiterated his appeal for an end to the pursuit of Assange, an Australian citizen, highlighting that his ongoing detention would yield no benefits. "We continue to work very closely to achieve that outcome," the sexagenarian prime minister told reporters on Tuesday, adding that "enough is enough."

Albanese had earlier voiced his concern, saying that the ongoing prosecution of Assange "cannot just go on and on and on indefinitely." His latest plea came in the light of Monday's decision by the UK High Court allowing Assange's appeal against extradition, which hinders Washington's attempts to prosecute him for disclosing US military information. His extradition was approved by the UK in June 2022.

The 52-year-old Australian hacker and the founder of WikiLeaks has been granted permission to initiate a limited appeal, which will examine whether he will be granted freedom of speech rights as a non-citizen within the US legal framework.

If Monday's decision had gone against him, Assange's legal team said that he could have been on a plane for the United States within a day, thereby concluding over a decade of legal disputes in the UK.

The announcement sparked jubilant celebrations among supporters who gathered outside the courthouse. "We don't know how long this will go on for and it takes an enormous toll on him," his wife, Stella Assange, who had been in court with Assange's brother and father, told Reuters.

"I hope that the U.S. administration looks at this case and now... considers it should just be dropped," she said. "The signals should be clear that it's time to drop it."

Among the information Assange disclosed, there are some 700,000 confidential documents about the US military and diplomatic activities, and the war crimes committed by the U.S. in Iraq.

Since April 2019, he has been held in the high-security Belmarsh prison in London, following a seven-year period of confinement in Ecuador's London embassy.

The U.S. government is pursuing legal action against Assange for revealing confidential U.S. military intelligence related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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