

Assange blasts court for preventing communication with lawyers, affirms legal team is being spied on



London, February 27 (RHC)-- On the third day of his extradition hearing, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has rebuked the court for preventing him from communicating with his legal team, saying his prosecutors have "100 times more contact hours each day."

Amid a prosecution argument about whether or not he stands charged with "political offenses," Assange stood and told the court that "the problem is I cannot participate, I cannot privately communicate with my lawyers."

Judge Vanessa Baraitser responded to the 48-year-old journalist and publisher by saying she would not allow him to address the court: "Mr Assange, generally defendants do not have a voice." The Australian continued to try and get his point across so the magistrate adjourned the court for five minutes while the defense team held a 'private' meeting.

"The other side must have something like 100 contact hours each day," Assange said upon the conclusion of the adjournment, before adding that his legal team is being spied on. "There is already enough spying on my lawyers as it is. There are a number of unnamed embassy officials here. There are two microphones in here. What's the point of asking if I can concentrate if I can't participate?"

"I am as much a participant in these proceedings as I am at Wimbledon," Assange wistfully joked, stating that there was a microphone in the glass defendants dock. The defense team asked for Assange to be removed from the dock so that he could sit with them; prosecutors reportedly didn't object but the judge felt the security team might.

"It is your call, Madam," the prosecutors said. Defense counsel Edward Fitzgerald argued that Assange is "no threat to anyone," adding: "He is a gentle man of an intellectual nature. There's no reason for him not to sit with us."

The judge then asked whether they would like to submit a formal bail application to make that a reality. The defense team will now submit such a formal bail application and a decision will be made. For the time being, Assange will remain in the dock away from his legal team.

The extradition hearing is set to decide whether the U.S. request for extradition is legitimate under the terms of a 2003 treaty between the UK and the US. Assange faces more than a dozen charges of conspiracy with a potential life sentence if extradited and convicted.

The WikiLeaks founder's legal team has insisted that the prosecution's case is full of "lies, lies and more lies."

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