

Julian Assange lawyers sue CIA for spying on them during meetings with WikiLeaks founder

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This file photo shows supporters of Julian Assange holding a banner outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London, England. (Photo by Reuters)

Washington, August 16 (RHC)-- A group of journalists and lawyers have filed a lawsuit against the U.S. intelligence agency, CIA, and its former director Mike Pompeo, saying the agency spied on them when they visited WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange during his stay in Ecuador's embassy in London.

The lawsuit, filed on Monday, says under Pompeo, CIA violated the privacy rights of American journalists and lawyers by spying on them. "The United States Constitution shields American citizens from U.S. government overreach even when the activities take place in a foreign embassy in a foreign country," said Richard Roth, the lead attorney representing the plaintiffs.

The CIA, which declined to comment on the lawsuit, is prohibited from collecting intelligence on U.S. citizens. However, several lawmakers have alleged that the agency maintains a secret repository of Americans' communications data.

The lawsuit also says the journalists and lawyers meeting with the Wikileaks founder were required to surrender their electronic devices to Undercover Global S.L. -- a private security company, which at the time provided security to the Ecuadorian embassy in London -- before their visits to Assange.

The plaintiffs say the company copied the information existing on their electronic devices and provided it to the CIA, which was then headed by Pompeo.

Pompeo and Undercover Global S.L. have so far declined to comment on the lawsuit and allegations put forth by plaintiffs. Assange spent seven years in the Ecuadorian embassy before being dragged out and jailed in 2019. Since June 2019, he has been fighting extradition to the U.S. and remains in prison in London.

Assange, who is wanted by U.S. authorities on 18 counts, will be extradited within 28 days if his appeal is rejected by the High Court. His lawyers had previously said he could face a possible penalty of up to 175 years in prison if convicted in the United States.

Assange is wanted by the U.S. government for publishing about 750,000 classified military and diplomatic documents related to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The most damning batch was The Iraqi War Logs, which represent the biggest military leak in the U.S. history.

The wife of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange says he was subjected to "especially cruel"

Since the beginning of his political activism, Assange has been praised as an anti-establishment hero who has exposed Washington's crimes against humanity in conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. His supporters accuse the United States and Britain of victimizing him and denounce his prosecution as a politically motivated assault on journalism and free speech.

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