

UN special rapporteur urges UK to halt Julian Assange's extradition, citing torture risk

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London, February 6 (RHC)-- The UN special rapporteur on torture, Alice Jill Edwards, urged the UK on Tuesday to halt the possible extradition of Julian Assange to the United States. Edwards urged authorities to heed his appeal as he highlighted Assange's fragile mental state and cited grave concerns

that extradition could subject him to treatment tantamount to torture or forms of cruel punishment.

"Julian Assange suffers from a long-standing and recurrent depressive disorder. He is assessed as being at risk of committing suicide," said Edwards. "In the United States, he faces numerous charges, including under the Espionage Act of 1917 for alleged unlawful releases of diplomatic and other cables and documents via WikiLeaks."

Assange, whose extradition proceedings have drawn international attention, faces prolonged solitary confinement and a potential prison term of up to 175 years, if convicted.

"The risk of being placed in prolonged solitary confinement, despite his precarious mental health status, and to receive a potentially disproportionate sentence raises questions as to whether Mr. Assange's extradition to the United States would be compatible with the UK's international human rights obligations," said Edwards. "I call on the Government of the United Kingdom to carefully review Mr. Assange's extradition order with a view to ensuring full compliance with the absolute and non-derogable prohibition of refoulement to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

The impending decision looms large as Assange's final domestic appeal approaches before the High Court in London on February 20th and 21st.

Assange, the controversial figure behind WikiLeaks, faces 18 criminal counts in the US for his alleged role in unlawfully obtaining and disclosing classified documents related to national defense, including evidence exposing alleged war crimes. He has been detained in the UK since 2019 and is currently held at Belmarsh prison.

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