

Sweden Finally Asks to Question Assange in Ecuador Embassy



London, June 22 (RHC)-- Sweden has asked to question WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London, where he has been holed up for four years, the Guardian reports. The request marks an apparent shift in the stalemate between the Swedish authorities and the whistleblower who has long asked to be interviewed in his asylum to avoid feared extradition to the United States.

Ecuador has repeatedly called for Swedish prosecutors to take Assange's statements over rape allegations in its London embassy since he took refuge there and has reiterated its willingness to cooperate with the Swedish justice system in recent months.

According to the Guardian, Ecuadorean Foreign Minister Guillaume Long, who met with his U.K. counterpart Hugo Swire in London on Monday, said that Ecuador may need further guarantees about the process, given the Sweden's longstanding reluctance to answer calls to question Assange in the embassy. Nevertheless, the country welcomed the "change of heart and signs of a new political will."

Assange faces an allegation of rape from Sweden, although he has never been charged. Swedish prosecutors dropped charges of sexual assault against Assange when the five-year limitation on the charges expired last August.

Assange has denied all allegations of sexual assault and rape, claiming they are fabricated and part of a smear campaign to facilitate his extradition to the United States to face trial for WikiLeaks whistleblowing.

The WikiLeaks founder entered his fifth year inside the Ecuadorean Embassy on Monday in conditions that the United Nations has deemed arbitrary detention. Swedish and British authorities have dismissed the U.N. ruling.

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