

Britain Refuses to Allow Julian Assange 'Safe Passage' for MRI Scan



Quito, October 15 (RHC)-- Ecuador has requested that WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange be allowed “safe passage” out of the country’s London embassy to a hospital for a medical examination.

Ecuador’s foreign ministry said on Wednesday it had made the request so that Assange, who has been living for 40 months inside its London embassy, could undergo an MRI scan to investigate pain in his shoulder. At present, he faces arrest if he leaves the embassy.

“We did ask the British government for a safe passage for humanitarian reasons in coordination with Ecuador, so that Julian Assange can get an MRI,” the foreign minister, Ricardo Patiño, told a briefing in Quito.

“The reply we have had from Britain is that he can leave whenever he likes for any medical care he might need, but the European arrest warrant for Assange is still valid. In other words, he can leave – and we will put him in jail,” Patiño added.

The WikiLeaks founder, an Australian national, sought political asylum at the embassy in June 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden, where prosecutors want to question him over rape allegations. In August they dropped their investigation into two other claims – one of sexual molestation and one of unlawful coercion – because they ran out of time to question him.

The development comes after Scotland Yard called off its multimillion-pound 24-hour surveillance of the embassy earlier this week, having decided the operation was “no longer proportionate.” Asked if Assange would be arrested if he left the embassy to visit a hospital a spokesperson at the British Foreign Office said that it was a matter for the police.

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