

Mexican president says he pleaded for Julian Assange in letter to Biden

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Julian Assange has appealed against the UK government's decision last month approving his extradition to the US

Mexico City, July 18 (RHC)-- Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has said he gave a letter to his U.S. counterpart Joe Biden in defense of Julian Assange after the United Kingdom approved the Wikileaks founder's extradition to the United States.

In response to a reporter's question during a news conference on Monday, Lopez Obrador said Mexico has renewed a previous offer of asylum to Julian Assange. "I left a letter to the president about Assange, explaining that he did not commit any serious crime, did not cause anyone's death, did not violate any

human rights, and that he exercised his freedom, and that arresting him would mean a permanent affront to freedom of expression,” Lopez Obrador said.

“I also said that Mexico is offering protection and asylum to Julian Assange,” he said, adding that he has not yet heard back from Biden. The development comes after the UK last month approved Assange’s extradition to the United States to face criminal charges related to WikiLeaks’ release of confidential US military records and diplomatic cables.

UK Home Secretary Priti Patel’s office said British courts had concluded the extradition would not be incompatible with Assange’s human rights, and claimed that he would be treated appropriately.

On July 1st, Assange appealed his extradition to the U.S. at the High Court in London. The 51-year-old, who was born in Australia, is wanted by U.S. authorities on 18 counts, including a spying charge, relating to WikiLeaks’ release of vast troves of confidential US military records and diplomatic cables that Washington said had put lives in danger.

The Australian government has been under mounting pressure to intervene, but last month Prime Minister Anthony Albanese rejected calls for him to publicly demand that Washington drop its prosecution of Assange.

Last week, Lopez Obrador met with Biden in Washington, DC, during which the Mexican president said he brought up Assange’s case. Lopez Obrador, often referred to as AMLO, recently said the Statue of Liberty should be dismantled and returned to France if Julian Assange is imprisoned in the United States.

Assange’s supporters, meanwhile, say the Wikileaks founder is an anti-establishment hero who has been victimised because he exposed U.S. war crimes in conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. They argue that his prosecution is a politically motivated assault on journalism and free speech.

“The fight to save Assange is also the fight to save press freedom and our First Amendment rights,” DC Action for Assange and the Assange Defense Committee, U.S.-based groups, said in a letter thanking Lopez Obrador for his support last week.

“We agree with you that the prosecution of Mr Assange for publishing is a profound threat to journalism around the world. We appreciate your consistent vocal support for these important principles, core tenets of a functioning democracy,” they said.

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