

Stella Assange says Biden considering dropping charges against Julian is a good sign

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Protester stands in front of the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, Thursday, April 11, 2024, where Wikileaks founder Julian Assange was arrested five years ago. US President Joe Biden said Wednesday that he is considering a request from Australia to drop the decade-long U.S. push to prosecute Wikileaks founder Julian Assange for publishing a trove of American classified documents. (AP Photo/Frank Augstein)

London, April 12 (RHC)-- Julian Assange's wife says it is a "good sign" U.S. President Joe Biden is considering dropping prosecution charges against the imprisoned WikiLeaks founder. Stella Assange said on Thursday her husband was "extremely unwell" and "stressed obviously because he could be extradited to the United States to face 175 years in prison."

"We're considering it," Biden replied when asked if he had a response to Australia's request to drop prosecution of Assange. Australia's parliament passed a motion in February with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's support for the release of Assange.

"I have said that we have raised, on behalf of Mr Assange, Australia's national interests that enough is enough and this needs to be brought to a conclusion and we've raised it at each level of government in every possible way," Albanese told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"I hope Joe Biden really just drops this case now as the entire human rights community and press freedom community is asking him to do," Stella Assange said.

Assange, an Australian citizen, has been held in Britain since 2019 while fighting extradition to the United States. He faces prosecution in the United States over an alleged conspiracy to obtain and disclose secret military and diplomatic files in 2010 relating to the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The WikiLeaks founder has now spent five years at the high-security Belmarsh Prison in southeast London.

The 52-year-old is currently waiting to learn if he can make a last-ditch appeal against extradition to the United States, after a UK court last month delayed a decision pending assurances by US authorities that he would not face the death penalty. The next hearing is expected on May 20th.

Before going to prison, Assange spent seven years holed up in Ecuador's London embassy to avoid extradition to Sweden. He was taken into custody by British police on April 11, 2019, when Ecuador revoked his asylum and gave permission to the UK to invade their embassy.

WikiLeaks came into limelight in 2010 when it released hundreds of thousands of classified files and diplomatic cables. In 2010, the Australian national published a series of leaks provided by US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning, including about 750,000 classified military and diplomatic documents related to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars which exposed the US military's crimes in these countries.

Assange's prosecution has been widely criticized by press freedom and human rights groups who say that the journalist is being targeted for unveiling West's crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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