



## Julian Assange Criticizes Pres. Obama in Video Address to UN

Seated behind a desk in a small office inside the Ecuadorian embassy in London where he has lived since June, WikiLeaks founder and editor-in-chief Julian Assange delivered [via a very choppy video link](#) an address to the United Nations.

In his nearly 20-minute address, Assange “[mocked](#)” President Barack Obama for taking credit for being the warm wind that blew life into the Arab Spring.



“It must have come as a surprise to the Egyptian teenagers who washed American teargas out of their eyes (during the Arab Spring) to hear that the U.S. supported change in the Middle East,” Assange said.

Moving on to his own work, the 41-year-old Australian native defended the web-based virtual whistleblower he created, calling on President Obama to “keep his word” by calling off the U.S. “persecution of WikiLeaks.”

Assange’s legal status is still up in the air, precisely where it has been since August 16 when the government of Ecuador granted him asylum.

In separate remarks to the nations gathered at the annual UN confab, Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Ricardo Patino “suggested no solution is in sight to the diplomatic standoff” [according to a report filed by Reuters](#).

As *The New American* reported, the web got increasingly more tangled after Ecuador’s decision to shield Assange from extradition to Sweden. Britain responded by laying siege to the Ecuadorian embassy in London, threatening to storm the building and apprehend Assange.

At that time, Patino [denounced the threatened revocation](#) of diplomatic status, reminding the UK that Ecuador was no longer a British colony. “We want to be very clear, we’re not a British colony. The colonial times are over,” Patino said after a meeting with Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa.

For its part, the British government dismissed Ecuador’s act to protect Assange, insisting that he remains a fugitive from justice.

“The United Kingdom does not recognize the principle of diplomatic asylum,” [said British foreign secretary William Hague](#). Hague cited the Diplomatic and Consular Premises Act 1987, claiming that Britain could legally revoke the Ecuador embassy’s diplomatic status. Hague also warned that Britain would not grant Assange safe passage out of the embassy.

Hague’s commitment to capturing Assange was confirmed by a Scotland Yard document accidentally made public after a photograph of it being carried under the arm of a police officer was published August 24.

Details of the document’s contents were [revealed by the Guardian newspaper](#).

The brief begins: “BRIEF — EQ. Embassy brief — Summary of current position Re Assange. Action



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on September 27, 2012

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required – Assange to be arrested under all circumstances.” It then makes reference to a “dip bag” and a “dip vehicle.”

A Scotland Yard spokesman said: “The document is one officer’s notes from a briefing. Our objective is to arrest Julian Assange for breach of bail. Under no circumstances would any arrest be made which was in breach of diplomatic immunity.”

Assange sought refuge at the embassy in June, after the [Supreme Court of the United Kingdom denied his application](#) to reconsider his appeal of an earlier decision by that court.

The case brought before the Supreme Court of the UK concerned whether a [European Arrest Warrant](#) (EAW) issued by Sweden for Julian Assange was valid. In its ruling of May 30, the seven-member panel of judges held that the EAW was valid and as a result Assange now will be extradited to Sweden to face allegations of sexual assault.

The events that led to Assange’s arrest (without charge or due process) are well-known.

In late July 2010, WikiLeaks released the so-called Afghan War Diary. These documents are a collection of internal U.S. military logs of the war in Afghanistan that appear to confirm Pakistani aid to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, as well as the disclosure of the numerous civilian casualties of the military action of the United States.

In the days following the Afghan War Diary release, Julian Assange traveled to Sweden hoping to establish residency and to move the headquarters of WikiLeaks there in order to take advantage of that country’s liberal whistleblower laws.

Assange admits that while in Sweden he had consensual sex with two women in August 2010.

Although Ecuador has extended its diplomatic cover to him, Assange fears that if he is forced to return to Sweden, that country might then extradite him to the United States where he could face serious charges of espionage or conspiracy regarding WikiLeaks’ disclosure of the Afghan War Diary and other documents revealing the U.S. government’s purposeful deception in its prosecution of illegal wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A [WikiLeaks disclosure made in February of e-mails from the Austin, Texas-based security firm Stratfor](#) appears to confirm that a U.S. grand jury secretly indicted Assange around January 26, 2011.

[Reuters reports](#) that President Correa “shares Assange’s fears that if handed over to Sweden, he could then be extradited to the United States to face charges over WikiLeaks’ 2010 publication of secret U.S. cables.”

The U.S. State Department denies that the United States plans to prosecute Assange. “This is an issue between the Ecuadoreans, the Brits, the Swedes,” [Reuters quotes State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland](#) saying. “With regard to the charge that the U.S. was intent on persecuting him, I reject that completely,” she added.

Assange doesn’t buy the denial.

[In a separate statement similar in tone also delivered from the Ecuadorian embassy](#), Assange called upon the government of the United States to “renounce its witch hunt against Wikileaks” and to “dissolve its FBI investigation.”

Declaring there is “unity in the oppression,” Assange railed against the Obama administration’s persecution of whistleblowers. Specifically he called for the pardoning of Thomas Drake, William



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Binney, and John Kirakou and for the release of PFC Bradley Manning.

Manning was described by Assange as a “hero, an example to us all and one of the world’s foremost political prisoners.”

As Assange rightly noted in his speech, Manning has been confined for over 800 days without a trial. Despite the truth in much of what he had to say — and perhaps because of it — Assange’s address is unlikely to remove the threat of ultimate extradition to the United States.

Ecuador insists that its extension of asylum to Assange is not intended to shield him from Swedish prosecution. In fact, if Britain and Sweden will promise not to hand Assange over to the United States (or any third country), then the exiled WikiLeaks editor will reportedly “[hand himself over to Swedish authorities.](#)”

During his speech, Assange claimed that neither Britain nor Sweden has agreed to accept this condition for his surrender.

Patino is reportedly meeting with British Foreign Secretary William Hague while both are in New York attending the UN conference.

Saying that “the ball’s in their court,” Patino told Reuters that Ecuador is “not willing to cede much ground” in the struggle to sort out the Assange situation.

Looking relatively healthy, albeit weary, Assange told the approximately 150 people listening to his message, “I am free in the most basic and important sense: I’m free to speak my mind.”

Patino reflected on Assange’s physical confinement, saying, “I think of myself, how I’d react in that situation, not being able to go outside, being isolated,” he said.

“It’s practically like being jailed,” he told Reuters.

*Photo of Julian Assange addressing the United Nations General Assembly via videolink from the Ecuadorian embassy in London: AP Images*



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