

Time ignores voters push for Julian Assange

Written by AFP / The Swedish Wire

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NEW YORK (AFP) - Time magazine named Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg "person of the year" Wednesday, ignoring a push by readers of the magazine for WikiLeaks maestro Julian Assange to take the honor.



Zuckerberg, only 26, is the second youngest person named to the cover of Time's ritual annual.

Managing editor Richard Stengel said Zuckerberg's social networking service was "transforming the way we live our lives every day."

The runners-up chosen by Time were the conservative US Tea Party movement that made a big impact in recent midterm elections, followed by Assange.

Assange, currently behind bars in London on Swedish sexual assault charges, is at the center of a global uproar over his organization's leaking of secret US diplomatic cables.

Readers of Time magazine had voted overwhelmingly for him to be named "person of the year," followed by Lady Gaga, the US singer best known for her elaborate costumes.

But Stengel said that Facebook has turned into a global influence of unprecedented scope.

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"For connecting more than half-a-billion people and mapping the social relations among them (something that has never been done before); for creating a new system of exchanging information that has become both indispensable and sometimes a little scary; and finally, for changing how we all live our lives in ways that are innovative and even optimistic, Mark Elliot Zuckerberg is Time's 2010 Person of the Year," Stengel said in a statement.

Stengel described Zuckerberg, a Harvard dropout, as the equivalent of a "T-shirt-wearing head of state."

In an interview on NBC television, Stengel said Zuckerberg was "humbled" and "deeply affected" by the award.

Contrary to the unpleasant portrait of Zuckerberg presented in the hit Hollywood movie "The Social Network," the Facebook mogul is "very affable," Stengel said.

"He's very quick, he's quick witted." However, "what happens on camera is he pulls back, he gets shy."

Controversial, US-backed Afghan President Hamid Karzai and the group of Chilean miners who survived being buried underground in a tunnel were the final runners-up selected by Time.

In 1927, American aviator Charles Lindbergh was Time's first "man of the year," as it was then known, and the youngest at the age of 25.

The popular issue goes on newsstands Friday, bearing a close up photo of the blue-eyed Zuckerberg on the cover.{jcomments on}