

Assange in new UK extradition challenge

Written by AFP / The Swedish Wire
Wednesday, 16 November 2011 01:01 -

- [Julian Assange prepares to return to Sweden](#)

LONDON, November 15, 2011 (AFP) - WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange applied Tuesday for Britain's Supreme Court to hear his appeal against extradition to Sweden, dragging out a legal saga that has already lasted more than a year.

His latest gambit comes less than two weeks after the High Court in London ruled that the 40-year-old Australian could be sent to Sweden to face questioning over claims of rape and sexual assault made by two women.

On December 5, Assange will ask two High Court judges to rule whether the case raises a question of general public importance, the only way his appeal can proceed to Britain's top court.

"The High Court has received an application from Julian Assange for permission to take the case to the Supreme Court," a spokesman for the Judiciary of England and Wales told AFP.

Assange has strongly denied the allegations against him, claiming they are politically motivated and linked to the activities of WikiLeaks, which angered the United States by publishing thousands of secret documents.

The former computer hacker spent much of the last year under virtual house arrest since he was first detained in December 2010.

A lower court initially approved Assange's extradition in February, but he appealed to the High Court which rejected his challenge on November 2.

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Assange made the application for the Supreme Court to hear the case one day before the legal time limit.

The judiciary said the High Court would "consider Julian Assange's application for a certificate of law of general public importance on 5 December."

Legal sources said a decision was expected on the same day but that it was not certain. If Assange loses he will be extradited to Sweden within 10 days.

According to the the Sweden Vs. Assange website, which is linked to Assange and WikiLeaks, his defence will focus on the validity of the European Arrest Warrant that was issued to him in December last year.

His team will also query whether he can be defined as "accused" despite having not been prosecuted, the website added.

Assange has previously expressed fears that his extradition to Sweden would lead to his transfer to the United States to face as yet unspecified charges of spying.

The legal challenge comes despite the fact that a Swedish public relations firm claimed last week that it had been hired by Assange and that he would soon be returning to Sweden to face questioning over the allegations.

Swedish prosecutors want to question Assange on suspicion of two counts of sexual molestation and an accusation of rape made by two Swedish women in August 2010.

In their decision earlier this month, the two judges dealing with his appeal rejected Assange's claims that the Swedish warrant was invalid because it was issued by a prosecutor and not a court.

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They also rejected his assertion that the claims made by the two women would not be offences under English law.

One woman alleged that Assange had unprotected sex with her while she was asleep, and the judges rejected his lawyers' contention that consent to sex with a condom remained consent when a condom was not used.

The judges also rejected Assange's argument that he should not be extradited because he was only wanted for questioning, and they denied the arrest warrant was disproportionate, given that Assange offered to be questioned via videolink.

The former hacker caught the world's attention when WikiLeaks released tens of thousands of classified diplomatic files allegedly obtained by Bradley Manning, a US serviceman who is now in prison in the United States.