New report reveals Assange under 24/7 surveillance in Ecuadoran Embassy

By Eric London
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On Monday, the Spanish newspaper _El Diario_ exposed previously unknown facts about the Ecuadoran government’s illegal surveillance of WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange. For the last year of his stay in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, the government of both current president Lenín Moreno and predecessor Rafael Correa “spied on every movement of Julian Assange in its embassy in London,” _El Diario_ reports. The _El Diario_ report is based on new documents obtained from UC Global Security Consulting, the firm contracted by the Ecuadoran government to spy on Assange under the guise of “protecting” him. The report reveals that Ecuador substantially heightened its efforts to spy on Assange, subjecting him to 24/7 surveillance “between April 2017 and the end of February 2018 in his London refuge, according to unsigned intelligence reports of the Ecuadoran government labeled ‘confidential.’” In March, Ecuador cut Assange’s access to the Internet and telephone, effectively blocking him from communicating with the outside world. _El Diario_ reports: “The acts of the security company were not limited to detailing incidents that were registered during these dates [between April 2017 and February 2018] on the outside of the embassy, where there were gatherings and a small demonstration, but also detailed and photographed what occurred inside the government building, where a network of security cameras registered all of Assange’s activity. These images were sent to screens located in an apartment located 100 meters from the embassy in one of the most expensive neighborhoods in London.” The report indicates that Assange was monitored as he moved from room to room and that security contractors watched him on a “live” feed. Reports from UC Global Security Consulting warned the Ecuadoran government that Assange was meeting with supporters of the Catalan independence movement and that such meetings could damage relations between Ecuador and Spain. _El Diario_ also noted that the intelligence reports compiled about Assange were rife with false information about Assange and the people with whom he met:

“The intelligence reports to which eldiario.es has had access are filled with errors and incorrect statements. Some names of visitors Assange received are not correct, there are misspellings and on some documents, and the Ecuadoran embassy is referred to as the Colombian Embassy. There are also mistakes in identifying the people with whom the WikiLeaks founder has access, like when the report speaks of Renata Avila, who it refers to as one of his Spanish lawyers from the office of Baltasar Garzon. Avila is not Spanish and he is not a lawyer in Garzon’s office.”

The revelation that intelligence reports included false information about Assange and his connections is a major blow to efforts to portray Assange as a shadowy manipulator. The international pressure campaign against Assange, led by the US government with support from its British allies, has focused on Assange’s alleged connections to various Russians and Trump representatives. The Democratic Party is currently suing Assange and WikiLeaks, claiming he illegally manipulated the outcome of the 2016 election. The Ecuadoran government has likewise justified its decision to cut off Assange’s right to communicate with the outside world by fraudulently claiming he was both attempting to “hack” the Ecuadoran embassy as well as to sabotage Ecuadoran foreign relations. But the _El Diario_ report shows the intelligence reports compiled on Assange are based on lies and falsehoods. The _El Diario_ report underscores the urgent danger Assange faces at the hands of the Ecuadoran
government that has violated his rights both as an
Ecuadoran citizen and as a refugee under international
asylum law. The fact that it was the government of
Rafael Correa that initially ordered closer surveillance
of Assange in 2017 also shows Assange has little
reason to count on support from the Correa faction of
the ruling Alianza PAIS party. The bourgeois press in
Ecuador is demanding that incoming Foreign Minister
Jose Valencia, who replaced outgoing minister Maria
Fernanda Espinosa on June 11, take measures to handle
“the Assange case.”

The right-wing El Comercio praised Valencia’s appointment as a sign that the
Ecuadoran government is returning control over foreign affairs to career diplomats rather than Alianza
PAIS loyalists. El Comercio reported on June 8 that
one of Valencia’s top priorities must include solving
the Assange “problem,” which is “generating political
and economic obstacles” and must be dealt with
“quickly.” Valencia most recently served as Ecuador’s
representative to the US-dominated Organization of
American States (OAS). He was educated in the United
States and received a master’s degree from Harvard
Kennedy School of Government. The round-the-clock
surveillance of Assange is in clear violation of
international law, specifically the right to asylum. The
1951 United Nations Refugee Convention bars
vindictive restrictions on fundamental rights like those
being carried out by Ecuador against Assange. Article
26 of the convention bars host countries from blocking
“free movement” of asylees, Article 15 guarantees the
right to association and Article 16 guarantees access to
the courts. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights,
a body to which Ecuador is subject, has established that
“the right of due process of law is a right that must be
ensured to everyone, irrespective of his migratory
status.”

These violations of international law further
underscore the obligation of the Australian government
to intervene on Assange’s behalf. Under the legal
principle of diplomatic protection, Australia must
protect the rights of its own citizens abroad. As the
WSWS wrote on June 11, “The issue at stake for the
Australian government is its commitment to the
protection of the human rights of its citizens, including
internationally recognized legal and democratic norms
such as free speech, the right of due process, freedom
from cruel and degrading treatment, and the right not to
be punished in the absence of a criminal act.”

On Sunday, June 17, the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) is hosting a
demonstration at 1:00 p.m. at Sydney Town Hall to
demand the Turnbull government honor its obligations
under international law by intervening to secure
Assange’s right to return to Australia unmolested. We
encourage all readers to join the demonstration and
similar vigils and protests being held internationally in
defense of Assange.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

http://www.wsws.org

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