

Swedish Court Orders Wikileaks Founder Jailed In Rape Case

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A Swedish court ordered the arrest of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on suspicion of rape and sexual molestation Thursday and an international warrant will be issued for him, a judge and prosecutor said.

"It has been decided that he be detained in absentia," Stockholm district court judge Alan Camitz told AFP.

Assange was sought on allegations of "probable cause suspected of rape, sexual molestation and unlawful coercion," said prosecutor Marianne Ny, who had requested his detention.

To "execute the court's decision, the next step is to issue an international arrest warrant," she said in a statement. This would be done soon through Interpol, she said.

Assange, a 39-year-old Australian, has strongly denied the charges and hinted that they could be part of a "smear campaign" against Wikileaks for publishing classified US documents on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His British attorney Mark Stephens said he planned to challenge the decision to arrest him.

Ny, the head of Swedish department that oversees prosecution of sex crimes, told AFP: "I requested his arrest so we could carry out an interrogation with Assange."

A warrant was first issued for Assange's arrest on August 20 by another prosecutor on suspicion he had raped one woman and sexually molested another, but the warrant was withdrawn just hours later.

Ny reopened the rape investigation on September 1 but did not request his detention, making it possible for him to leave Sweden.

"We have exhausted all the normal procedures for getting an interrogation (and) this investigation has gotten to a point where it is not possible to go further without interrogating Assange himself," Ny said.

She said she did not know where the former hacker was and had no idea how to get in touch with him.

Stephens, his lawyer, said Assange was in London earlier Thursday but refused to disclose his current whereabouts.

He said Thursday's hearing was the first time Assange's lawyers had heard the full details of the charges since the allegations were made public in August.

"Both the prosecutor and the defence agree that it was an incident of consensual sex where the

condom broke. They are saying that amounts to rape, we are saying it doesn't," he added.

Assange's lawyer in Sweden, Bjoern Hurtig, said the prosecutor's petition was "exaggerated" and "out of proportion."

He stressed that his client "is absolutely prepared to come to Sweden (and) wants to cooperate," and had even proposed some dates that would work for him.

Ny said however she was not aware of any offers from Assange to come to Sweden for interrogation.

"I would like to stress that the district court shared our opinion that there is flight risk in this case," she said.

Assange admitted in a September interview with AFP that he had met the two women at the centre of the allegations, whose names have not officially been made public, but refused then to say if he had sex with either of them.

The women's lawyer, Claes Borgstroem, said Thursday he was relieved that Ny had requested Assange's arrest.

"Finally. This should have been done earlier," he told the TT news agency.

Two days before the allegations against Assange were made public in August, he had applied for a work and residency permit in Sweden, where some of Wikileaks' servers are located, but his application was turned down on October 18.

WikiLeaks last month published an unprecedented 400,000 classified US documents on the Iraq war and posted 77,000 secret US files on the Afghan conflict in July.

See also report from [The Register](#).

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