

NEWS RELEASE - UN expert on torture alarmed at reports Assange may soon be expelled from Ecuador embassy

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GENEVA (5 April 2019) – The UN Special Rapporteur on torture Nils Melzer is alarmed by reports that Julian Assange may be expelled imminently from the Embassy of Ecuador in London, saying he intended to personally investigate the case.

“In my assessment, if Mr. Assange were to be expelled from the Embassy of Ecuador, he is likely to be arrested by British authorities and extradited to the United States,” said the UN expert. “Such a response could expose him to a real risk of serious violations of his human rights, including his freedom of expression, his right to a fair trial and the prohibition of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

“I therefore urge the Government of Ecuador to abstain from expelling Mr. Assange from its Embassy in London, or from otherwise ceasing or suspending his political asylum until such time as the full protection of his human rights can be guaranteed.

“Should Mr. Assange come under British jurisdiction for any reason, I urge the British Government to refrain from expelling, returning or extraditing Mr. Assange to the United States or any other jurisdiction, until his right to asylum under refugee law or subsidiary protection under international human rights law has been determined in a transparent and impartial proceeding granting all due process and fair trial guarantees, including the right to appeal,” said Melzer.

“According to information I have received, Mr. Assange is at risk of extreme vulnerability, and his health is in serious decline. I therefore appeal to the Ecuadorian authorities to continue to provide him, to the fullest extent possible in the circumstances, with adequate living conditions and access to appropriate medical care.

“I am currently preparing a formal request to the Governments of Ecuador and the United Kingdom to carry out an on-site visit to Mr. Assange, and to meet with the relevant authorities of both States in order to assess the situation and risks faced by Mr. Assange in light of the universal and absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

“Extradition without due process safeguards, including an individual risk assessment and adequate protection measures violates international law, particularly if the destination State practices the death penalty and has not disclosed the criminal charges held against the person concerned. Under such circumstances, the international legal prohibition of ‘refoulement’ is absolute, regardless of considerations of national security, political expediency or any other similar considerations,” the Special Rapporteur said.

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The UN expert; Nils Melzer, [Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#); is part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council’s independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures’ experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

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