

Assange, hacker or journalist?

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Julian Assange is a journalist who bared the hypocrisy of the mainstream media, revealed the cruel crimes of U.S. and its allies in irrational wars, but also changed the way of showing truth. That's why, he put up with his 7-year exile that, one might say, he dignified world journalism.

As if it weren't enough, over a dozen international institutions honored Wikileaks founder with top awards for his journalistic exercise and he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

To the shame of some media, he upended the biggest powers in the world, when he uncovered their criminal essence.

Since his arrest, on April 11th, his captors try him as a vulgar hacker, discrediting his commitment as a journalist, in an attempt to trample down his image.

Although in 2010 Assange was interviewed by the mainstream media and seen as a champion of free speech, now they are trying to trivialize the news over his detention. He's accused of bad behavior at the embassy, disguising the serious violation of his human rights and the arbitrary cancellation of both his political asylum and Ecuadorian citizenship.

Spanish analyst Fernando Casado, interviewed on teleSUR's program Enclave Política, underlines that the shift goes beyond having revealed documents. He highlights that his

situation gets complicated when he dares to criticize western governments and glorify leftist leaders that oppose neoliberal policies in their governance, like former President Rafael Correa.

For Argentine journalist and writer Sebastián Lacunza, states and media currently use new technologies available that change routines. “You can be a bit of a hacker and journalist, but what should define a journalist is the willingness to verify the material he/she has in hand in search of the truth, provide elements and make a valid text for the public”, he pointed out.

However, Casado stresses, if we conceptualize Assange as a hacker, we would have to say that Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, with the Watergate scandal, are hackers too, and that all those who do investigative journalism are hackers.

“What WikiLeaks does is to leak millions of raw documents that must then be analyzed, processed, contextualized and published, and that was what dailies, that now criticize Assange, such as *El País*, *The Guardian*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*... did in 2010. Nevertheless, we see that now, they cave in to the thesis that Assange is a hacker and even a stone in the shoe.

“The problem is that the cyber activist has broken the image of the United States. They can never again say there hasn’t been a direct interference in governments around the world.

There’s even a cable that highlights Lenín Moreno as an operator behind the scenes, a right-hand man for the embassy of the United States”, he concluded.

The fact is that there are 400,000 reports from the Iraq war, 90,000 reports from the Afghanistan war, 800 from Guantanamo detention center and “cablegate” with over 250,000 diplomatic cables towards Washington from US embassies in over 90 countries, several Latin American ones among them.

Undoubtedly, the scope of these leaks puts a price on Assange’s head, at the same time that the modern seven-league giant takes advantage to give an exemplary lesson to anyone who tries to undermine his hegemonic interests.

Hacker or journalist? One thing or the other, or both, will not erase the recognitions Assange has received in his fight in favor of free speech, freedom of the press and human rights overall (Amnesty International UK’s Media Award in 2009), or the world impact that his revelations have caused.

At the time, the mainstream media used the information revealed by Wikileaks founder, which makes them accomplices. They should foster pressure to avoid the extradition to United States of the most important cyberjournalist of the time, instead of disclosing silly videos of the “villain” skateboarding in the Ecuadorian embassy in London.

Translated by Jorge Mesa Benjamin / CubaSi Translation Staff
