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Extradition Hearing for Julian Assange Will be Split in Two

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The first part of the full hearing in February at Woolwich Crown Court will cover arguments that the extradition is politically motivated and an abuse of process.

The extradition hearings for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been split in two, with the second taking place in May, according to a ruling made by a judge on Thursday, January 23rd.

The judge ruled that the first extradition hearing for Assange will be scheduled for the week of February 23rd, while the remaining three weeks will be held on May 18.

This move comes after Assange's defense team argued that there was not enough time to receive and consider witness statements and that the WikiLeaks founder had difficulty accessing the case materials.

"We simply can't get in as we require to see Mr Assange and take instructions ... we need time to deal with that," his lawyer Edward Fitzgerald said.

The first part of the full hearing in February at Woolwich Crown Court will cover arguments that the extradition is politically motivated and an abuse of process.

Clair Dobbin, the lawyer representing the U.S. authorities, said they would oppose allowing Assange to call anonymous witnesses as his legal team intends. The hearing will also hear psychiatric evidence about his mental state.

In April 2019, Assange's asylum status was revoked by the Ecuadorean authorities after he spent the past seven years inside their embassy in Britain. He was immediately arrested by the British authorities after his asylum status was revoked.

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In May, the US Department of Justice indicted Assange on 17 additional charges under the Espionage Act and demanded his extradition.

Assange, 48, is facing serious charges, including espionage, that could result in his imprisonment for up to 175 years.

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