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Lawyers say Julian Assange is a political prisoner and cannot be extradited

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London, February 28 (RHC)-- The charges brought by the United States against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange are purely political and extradition to the U.S. is not permitted by law, the Australian journalist's defense affirms.

Julian Assange could receive a sentence of up to 175 years in prison in the United States on charges of espionage and computer hacking, "but these crimes are purely political," the lawyer for the Australian activist Edward Fitzgerald said during the third day of the extradition trial in London.

"Assange's extradition to the United States would be a breach of the 2003 British-American treaty, which expressly prohibits surrender for 'crimes of a political nature'," Fitzgerald said at Woolwich Crown Court, in southeast London. On the claim of breach of the extradition treaty with the United Kingdom, the defense of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange accused the United States of "abuse of process," by requesting his transfer for alleged espionage offenses.

Prosecutor James Lewis, who represents the United States in the case, said that "the crimes attributed to Assange are 'common crimes' and not political." Furthermore, he evaded prosecution by saying that "the request for extradition is not governed by the 2003 treaty, but by the British extradition law of the same year, which does not provide exemptions for political offenses."

Julian Assange, whose health has deteriorated over recent time, will continue the battle to

prevent his extradition to the United States until this Friday, when the trial will be postponed until May 18th.

Edited by Ed Newman

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