

Ecuador's Correa defends decision to grant asylum to WikiLeaks' Assange

By the **CNN Wire Staff**

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STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa says Great Britain's behavior is "unacceptable"

"They don't realize Latin America is free and sovereign," he says

Julian Assange has been holed up inside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London since June

Ecuador granted asylum to Assange, but the U.K. does not recognize it

(CNN) -- Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa on Saturday defended his country's decision to grant WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange asylum, slamming Great Britain's behavior toward Ecuador as "intolerable" and "unacceptable."

Assange is currently holed up inside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. Ecuador offered him asylum this week, but British authorities have said they are committed to extraditing him to Sweden, where Assange is wanted to face questioning over claims of rape and sexual molestation.

The situation remains at a standoff.

[Assange demands U.S. end WikiLeaks 'witch hunt'](#)

"Who do they think they're dealing with?" Correa asked rhetorically of Great Britain during his weekly address. "They don't realize Latin America is free and sovereign. We won't tolerate interference, colonialism of any kind."

The president said Ecuador had sought but did not receive guarantees that Assange would not be extradited to a third country.



Photos: WikiLeaks founder breaks his silence



Assange protests in London

Assange, an Australian national, and his supporters claim a U.S. grand jury has been empaneled to consider charges against him. They fear if he is extradited to Sweden, he could be sent next to the United States.

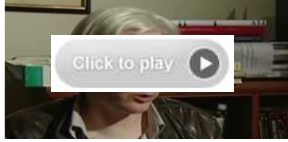
Assange was arrested in Britain in 2010 because Swedish authorities wanted to question him about the allegations. Two women accused him of sexually assaulting them during an August 2010 visit to Sweden in connection with a WikiLeaks release of internal U.S. military documents. Assange denies the allegations and argues they are in retribution for his organization's disclosure of American secrets.

Publicly silent since last March, Assange is expected to speak at 2 p.m. Sunday -- two months to the day since he sought asylum -- according to WikiLeaks' official Twitter

feed.



Why did Ecuador grant Assange asylum?



Can Assange leave London?

Also Sunday, foreign ministers from member states of the Union of South American Nations will convene in Guayaquil, Ecuador, to discuss the asylum situation.

Assange sought refuge at the embassy five days after the Supreme Court in Britain dismissed his bid to reopen his appeal of the decision to send him to Sweden, his last option in British courts. He is subject to arrest for breaking the terms of his bail, which required that he spend his nights at the home of a supporter outside London, police said the day after he entered the embassy.

[Assange and diplomatic asylum: A primer](#)

[Standoff at embassy, after Ecuador grants asylum](#)

[Opinion: Assange's stubborn grip hurt WikiLeaks](#)

[Why Assange needs Ecuador and why Ecuador needs Assange](#)