

WikiLeaks files on 'every country' will be released in 2013

LONDON, UK: *WikiLeaks* will release one million documents next year affecting every country in the world, says founder Julian Assange in a speech delivered from the balcony of the Ecuadorian embassy in London on Thursday (20 December).

In a *Christmas message* marking six months since he sought asylum in the embassy to avoid extradition to Sweden over claims of rape and sexual assault, Assange said the door was open to negotiations.

Assange said to cheers from around 100 supporters that despite spending half of 2012 holed up in the building it had been a "huge year" in which his anti-secrecy website had released documents about Syria and other topics.

"Next year will be equally busy. *WikiLeaks* is preparing more than a million documents to be released, and these documents would "affect every country in the world," he said to applause.

The Australian former computer hacker thanked Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa for granting him asylum and hit out at the United States and other Western governments.

"True democracy is not the White House, true democracy is not cameras, true democracy is the resistance of people armed with the truth against lies from Tahrir to London," he said.

But the 41-year-old added that "the door is open, and the door has always been open, for anyone who wishes to speak to me" to resolve the situation.

He raised his hand in a clenched fist salute at the end of the speech.

A statement issued by the Ecuadorian ambassador said: "At a time of year when people come closer together, Ecuador reaffirms the solidarity that our country gave six months ago to a person who was being persecuted for thinking and expressing themselves freely.

"Now is a moment for reflection and togetherness. On behalf of my country, I reiterate our support for Julian Assange. He has become a guest in this house that we all have learned to appreciate," added the statement.

Supporter Blake Cohen, an unemployed father, told *AFP*: "I don't know about his personal life -- I'm not a fly on the wall -- but I know that *WikiLeaks* is an organisation that promotes peace and justice. "The rape allegations seem like a classic honeytrap," he added.

It was Assange's first public appearance since he addressed a crowd from the same balcony -- now festooned with fairy lights -- on 19 August. Ecuadorian officials have since said that he is suffering from health problems.

Britain has refused to grant him safe passage to either Ecuador or to hospital, saying it has a legal obligation to extradite him to Sweden after Assange lost his final battle in the British courts in June.

Assange claims that if he is extradited to Sweden he could eventually be sent to the United States for prosecution over *WikiLeaks'* controversial release of secret US military and diplomatic files.

He fears he could face life in prison or even the death penalty in the US.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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