

Geneva Politicians Vote to Propose Julian Assange Asylum

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The Geneva city parliament has adopted a motion demanding that the Swiss government offer asylum to controversial WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

The somewhat surprising resolution was the result of an hour-long debate on Wednesday evening, framed in the context of providing better protection for whistleblowers.

The text was proposed by Eric Bertinat of the conservative right People's Party – a party not usually known for backing acts of “civil disobedience”, in the words of Social Democratic politician Albane Schlechten.

Nevertheless, the proposition picked up enough support from left-wing politicians to withstand opposition from the centre-right Radical Liberals.

The People's Party have also tried to push through legislation on the Geneva cantonal level to better protect whistleblowers, while at the federal level in Bern, one of its parliamentarians has raised Assange's case before the Federal Council (government).

At the time, the response of the government about offering asylum to the 47-year-old WikiLeaks founder was negative: he is not a defender of human rights, it said.

Assange initially sought asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy in London since 2012 to avoid being extradited to Sweden, where authorities wanted to question him as part of a sexual assault investigation. That investigation was dropped.

Assange, whose website published thousands of classified US government documents, denied the Sweden allegations, saying the charge was a ploy that would eventually take him to the United States where prosecutors are preparing to pursue a criminal case against him.

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