

Judgment Day: Ecuador Presidential Election to Determine Julian Assange's Fate

By [Sputnik](#)

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The fate of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange will depend in many respects on the results of the Ecuadorian presidential election.

Ecuador is set to hold the first round of elections, comprising eight candidates, on February 19, while the runoff is scheduled for April 2. The country's President Rafael Correa is not running in the election for the first time in more than a decade.

Assange has been residing at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London since 2012 for fear of being extradited to Sweden on rape allegations. The WikiLeaks founder denied the accusations. On December 4, 2015, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention's (WGAD) ruled that Assange's detention was arbitrary. The United Kingdom and Sweden have been refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the decision and to end Assange's prosecution.

While earlier Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Guillaume Long said that the government will not end Assange's asylum, right-wing presidential candidates have pledged to kick the whistleblower out of the embassy.

In particular, former banker Guillermo Lasso from the Creating Opportunities (CREO) right-wing alliance said that if elected he would insist that Assange leaves the embassy within 30 days. According to polls, Lasso is the main rival to Lenin Moreno from the pro-government bloc PAIS Alliance.

"Ecuador had no business spending a single cent protecting someone who definitely leaked confidential information," Lasso said from his 24th-floor office at the headquarter, overlooking the Banco de Guayaquil where he was executive president from 1994 to 2012.

"I will take on the responsibility of inviting Mr. Assange to leave the Ecuadorean embassy at the latest 30 days after the start of our government," he added on Thursday afternoon.



Julian Assange
@JulianAssange

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Coming third in polls Cynthia Viteri from the Social Christian Party (PSC) also said that if elected she would evict Assange from the embassy.

Moreno did not comment on the matter but the Foreign Ministry said that it will keep the asylum. At the same time, in November Assange's access to the internet in the embassy was restricted for the period of the United States election, according to the ministry.

In order to win the presidential election in Ecuador, a candidate must win over 50 percent of votes or no less than 40 percent, with a gap of over 10 percent from the runner-up. If the conditions are not met there is the runoff.

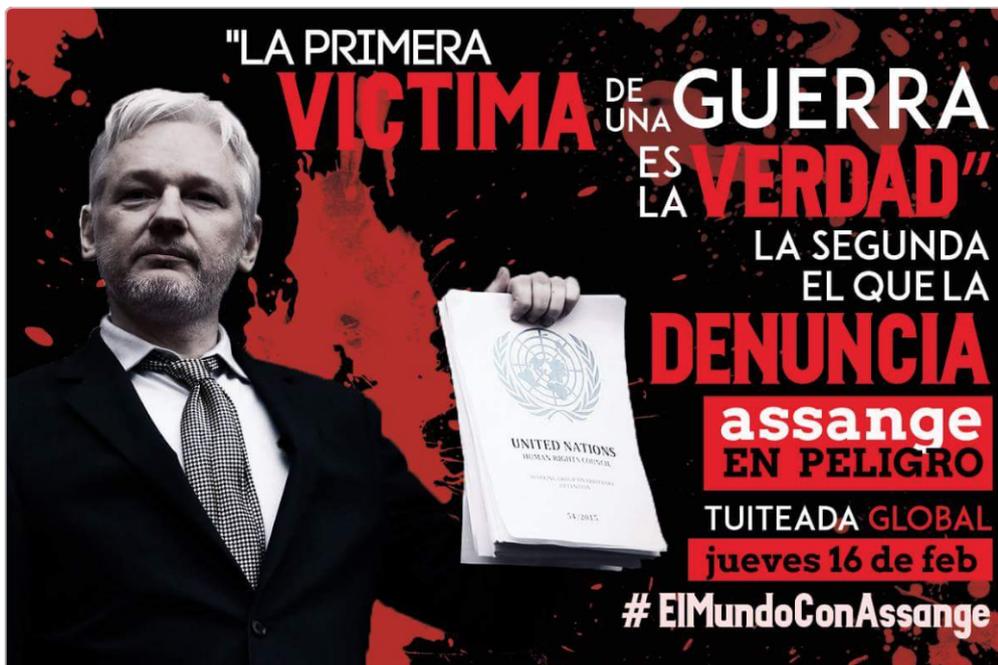
Ahead of the election, Ecuador was hit by a Twitter-storm as people from all over the world have been joining a campaign to pressure the right-wing candidates not to end Assange's asylum.

The campaign led by WikiLeaks and organized from Ecuador is running under the hashtag "ElMundoConAssange," which is translated as "the world stands with Assange."



“In the end, it was a beautiful thing – so much solidarity,” Felipe Ogaz Oviedo, who launched the campaign in Ecuador, [told](#) Telesur TV.

He added that the campaign was also aimed at countering the “manipulation” of Assange’s story with right-wing politicians portraying him as a criminal in order to win votes.



The statement on the image reads: “The first victim of war is truth. The second is one who denounces it.”

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