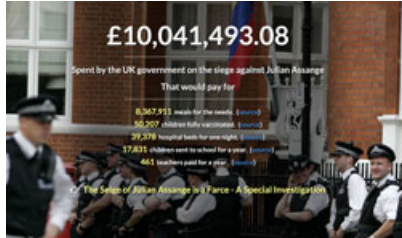


WikiLeaks site slams costs of policing Assange

LONDON, UK: WikiLeaks launched a website on Friday to condemn the costs to Britain of policing the group's founder Julian Assange, who has sought refuge from extradition to Sweden in Ecuador's embassy in London.



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The website has a counter clocking up policing costs - £10m and rising - and states how many hospital beds (39,000) and meals for the needy (8.3 million) could be provided for the same amount.

They could also pay the salary of 459 school-teachers, said the site, which features a large image of the police cordon outside the embassy.

Another counter tallies the amount of time elapsed since the beginning of the investigation and detention of Assange - 1,522 days and counting.

The site - www.gowaste.co.uk - also condemns as "shameful" the request for Assange's extradition made by Sweden, where he faces allegations of rape and sexual molestation which he denies.

A WikiLeaks spokesman Kristinn Hrafnsson said the costs of patrolling the embassy, where Assange has been holed up since June 2012, were "embarrassing".

The figures are in line with estimates by the police, which last year said they were spending €11,000 a day on 24-hour surveillance of the embassy, including overtime, cars and computer equipment.

Assange would be arrested if he stepped outside the embassy.

Assange says his extradition to Sweden could see him transferred on to the United States, which is investigating the release in 2010 of 500,000 secret military files on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and 250,000 diplomatic cables.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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