

# Ecuador Twists Embarrassing INA Papers into Pretext to Oust Assange

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*On 26 March, WikiLeaks' Twitter account announced that President Moreno is being investigated by Ecuador's Congress for corruption, sparked by the INA Papers leak. The same tweet referenced President Moreno's attempt to surrender Assange in exchange for US debt relief, a fact that had been [reported](#) by The New York Times.*

Corruption investigation opened against Ecuador's president Moreno, after purported leaked contents of his iPhone (Whatsapp, Telegram) & Gmail were published. New York Times reported that Moreno tried to sell Assange to US for debt relief. <https://t.co/OKFcBrnUfr>

— WikiLeaks (@wikileaks) [March 25, 2019](#)

The following day, [Foreign Minister Jose Valencia said](#) that the WikiLeaks tweet was “an absurd lie to harm the dignity of our country... we will not tolerate... inventions and insults... I cannot anticipate when and when we will take action in relation to this, but we will take action for certain.”

On 28 March, [Communications Minister Andrés Michelena told CNN Español](#) that the INApapers were part of a plot of Julian Assange, Venezuelan President Maduro and former Ecuadorian President Correa to bring down Moreno's government. He added,

“You have to understand how these people are connected, Mr. Assange is the Troll Center, the hacker for former President Correa, [Assange] handles the technological and social media side.”

That same day, the national assembly, in which Moreno's party and other right parties command a majority, [passed a resolution](#) inviting the Foreign Ministry to take action against Assange's asylum on the basis of the INApapers leak “in the national interest” if it considers it pertinent to do so.

In March 2019, [Moreno's approval ratings dropped to 17%](#). Statements by the government of Ecuador deliberately implicate WikiLeaks in the INApapers leak. For example, Ecuador's **Vice President Otto Sonnenholzner** said in a local radio [interview](#),

“What Wikileaks and other political actors have done, to publish private photos of the President of the Republic, of his family, is a despicable, repugnant, and odious act.”

The Foreign Minister said in a radio [interview](#):

“It is absolutely outrageous, reproachable, it shows Assange for what he is... of course we will act. We will not allow his website to interfere in the private channels of communication of the Ecuadorian head of state.... he is biting the hand that feeds him.”

**Foreign Minister José Valencia** has stated:

“we are going to analyze whether Mr. Julian Assange’s aggressive publications against the Ecuadorian state merits a legal action by the Ecuadorian state.”

On 1 April, Ecuador submitted a [request](#) to the United Nations Rapporteur on Privacy to take urgent measures in response to the INApapers publication, listing WikiLeaks as the responsible party.

President Moreno, desperate to divert public attention away from the scandal, is using the claims as a pretext to oust Julian Assange from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. On 2 April, the President [stated](#) that Assange has “violated the ‘conditions’ of his asylum” and that he will “take a decision” “in the short term.” He said,

“In WikiLeaks there is proof of espionage, of hacking, of the fact that phones have been intercepted and private conversations, there are even pictures of my bedroom.”

Assange’s lawyer in Ecuador, **Carlos Poveda**, [explained](#) that Assange had nothing to do with the publication:

“Remember that WikiLeaks has an internal organization and Mr. Assange is no longer in the editor. We will now resort to other types of situations, especially the Inter-American Commission”. ([Listen to audio here.](#))

Nevertheless, Ecuador’s Vice President, Otto Sonnenholzner, has suggested that Assange would be prosecuted over what he described as a WikiLeaks “hack,” alluding to the rigid [protocol](#) that Ecuador has imposed on Assange to maintain a constant threat of expulsion.

The INA Papers are a set of documents published in February 2019, allegedly uncovering the operations of INA Investment Corp, an offshore tax haven created by the brother of Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno. The trove of emails, phone communications and expense receipts are said to link the president and his family to a series of corrupt and criminal dealings, including money laundering and offshore accounts. The leak has sparked a congressional investigation into President Moreno for corruption. Moreno can’t be summoned for a criminal probe while he remains president. He is currently being investigated and risks impeachment.

[Former Consul of Ecuador Fidel Navarez denounces](#) the “resolution based on a lie” that blames Assange for the INA Papers:

The recent reaction of the Ecuadorian government to the INAPAPERS scandal could not be worse. Instead of clarifying and making the issue transparent, the government spokesmen, to divert attention from the still timorous official investigations, position a monumental lie, accusing WikiLeaks of having leaked communications and images of President Moreno’s family circle.

Not a single document referring to INAPAPERS, or the president’s family, has ever been leaked or published by WikiLeaks, let alone by Julian Assange, who for more than half a year has not been its editor and who has been isolated for one year under a regime quasi-prison by the government of Ecuador.

Despite being an outrageous accusation, the farce has reached the point that the Ecuadorian National Assembly has issued a resolution to investigate Julián and encourages the government to take measures to “safeguard national interests.” In short, the government seeks a false pretext to end the asylum and protection of Julian Assange.

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