

AI Index: PRE 01/663/2013
17 December 2013

Brazil must seriously consider Snowden asylum request

Brazil's government should give full consideration to Edward Snowden's claim for asylum in the country, Amnesty International said today after the US whistleblower offered to help a Brazilian spying probe and requested asylum.

Snowden said today in an "open letter to the Brazilian people", published on Facebook and in a Brazilian newspaper, that he wished to assist a government investigation into intelligence monitoring by his former employer the National Security Agency.

The former NSA agent, whose temporary asylum in Russia is due to expire in August, added that he would not be able to help without "permanent political asylum".

Snowden's request for asylum in Brazil, made in July, has not yet been answered.

"Edward Snowden has every right to seek permanent asylum and the Brazilian authorities should respond to his initial asylum claim seriously," said Atila Roque, Brazil Director of Amnesty International.

"The claim must be considered in a fair, unbiased and effective refugee determination procedure. It is his right to seek international protection, and it's also Brazil's international obligation to review and decide on his request under the refugee convention."

Brazil's government said today that his claim would not be considered until he has made a formal application.

"The Brazilian people, who suffered political persecution and mass surveillance during the years of dictatorship in the country, know all too well its abusive effects," said Atila Roque.

"Brazilians benefitted from international support at the time, and now the Brazilian authorities now have the opportunity to reciprocate by acting in solidarity with the victims of mass surveillance and in defence of human rights."

Based on publicly available information about Snowden, Amnesty International has stated that he is very likely to be in need of refugee protection or other form of international protection.

"US statements labelling Snowden a 'traitor' are prejudicial to his right to seek asylum and to his right to a fair trial," said Atila Roque.

"The information he released was in the public interest and shows the remarkably invasive extent of surveillance conducted by the United States."

The information released by Edward Snowden shows that the US government has been carrying out mass surveillance of private communications in the USA and beyond. This constitutes a systematic violation of

the right to privacy of millions of people worldwide.

“Edward Snowden is a whistleblower who has disclosed an unlawful global digital surveillance programme that has violated the right to privacy of millions of people. As such, he has grounds to seek asylum abroad out of well-founded fears the USA would persecute him for his actions” said Atila Roque.