

Venezuela Ready to Consider Asylum for Snowden

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said his country was ready to consider granting asylum to Edward Snowden, the former NSA contractor wanted by the U.S. for leaking state secrets.

"We would consider it, because asylum is a measure of humanitarian protection and is a mechanism of the international humanitarian law, which is popular in Latin America and was always used to protect the helpless," Maduro said.

Maduro said that "no one has the right to spy on someone else" and that Snowden deserves humanitarian protection for revealing details of a U.S. surveillance program. Maduro added that Snowden has not yet officially requested asylum in Venezuela, RIA-Novosti reported.

Meanwhile, the whistleblowing organization WikiLeaks said on its Twitter feed Wednesday that Snowden, 30, may be permanently stuck in Russia because his passport was canceled by U.S. authorities.

"Canceling Snowden's passport and bullying intermediary countries may keep Snowden permanently in Russia," WikiLeaks said on its Twitter feed, but did not specify the names of intermediary countries.

President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that Snowden, whose whereabouts had been the subject of international speculation for the past two days, was in the transit area of a Moscow airport. He denied that Russia was helping Snowden in his attempts to evade the U.S. authorities, saying that "any accusations against Russia are nonsense and rubbish."

Putin said that Snowden was "a free man, the sooner he picks a final destination, the better it is both for us and for him," Kommersant reported.

At present, there is no extradition treaty in place between the two countries that would require Russia to hand Snowden over to the U.S.

Snowden is wanted by the U.S. for disclosing a top-secret surveillance program that allegedly targeted millions of Americans. He took a plane from Hong Kong to Moscow on Sunday accompanied by WikiLeaks representative Sarah Harrison, the organization said in a statement.

Material from The Moscow Times is included in this report.

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