

Snowden Installed as Glasgow University Rector

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People hold masks depicting Edward Snowden during the NETmundial: Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance in Brazil on Wednesday.

Fugitive U.S. intelligence leaker Edward Snowden, who now lives in Russia, was inaugurated as the lord rector of Scotland's University of Glasgow on Wednesday after being elected to the post by its students.

The university's rector is elected by students to represent them with the school's senior management for a period of three years. Snowden, who was granted asylum in Russia last summer after leaking details of U.S. surveillance programs, will perform those duties in absentia.

"In a democracy people have a right to know the policy of their government ... this idea that if we believe in something we should stand up for it is what I will follow in my role as rector of the university," Snowden said, addressing a crowd of students and staff by a live video link.

Snowden could not attend the ceremony in person as he faces arrest in Britain and other countries over U.S.-imposed espionage charges.

The 30-year-old former NSA contractor flew to Russia last June after leaking tens of thousands of classified documents revealing mass U.S. government surveillance of U.S. citizens and world leaders. He spent more than a month in the transit zone of Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport before being granted one-year renewable asylum status in Russia.

Snowden currently resides in an undisclosed location, living what he described in an interview as the life of an "indoor cat." He works as a technical administrator for one of Russia's largest websites, according to his legal representative Anatoly Kucherena.

In addition to his new role as university rector, Snowden also serves on the Freedom of the Press Foundation board of directors.

Previous rectors at Glasgow University have included Israeli nuclear weapons program leaker Mordechai Vanunu and anti-apartheid activists Winnie Mandela and Albert Lutuli.

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