

## Assange autobiography to hit shelves despite row

LONDON: The autobiography of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was to go on sale Thursday (22 September 2011) despite efforts by the Australian anti-secrecy campaigner to suppress the book, its British publisher said.

The book, "Julian Assange: The Unauthorised Autobiography", reportedly includes his first direct comment on allegations of rape in Sweden that led to the former computer hacker fighting an extradition battle in Britain.

Publisher Canongate said Wednesday it was the first draft of Assange's autobiography as delivered to them in March 2011, and that they were going ahead with publication despite Assange's attempts to prevent the

"On 7 June 2011, with 38 publishing houses around the world committed to releasing the book, Julian told us he wanted to cancel his contract," said Canongate, a small Scottish publishing firm that beat larger rivals to sign the original deal.

"However, he had already signed his advance over to his lawyers to settle his legal bills. We have decided to honour that contract and to publish.

"Once the advance has been earned out, we will continue to honour the contract and pay Julian royalties." Assange disowned the publication, saying in a press statement released Thursday: "I am not 'the writer'."

The former hacker accused Canongate of acting in breach of contract, and called the book "a narrative and literary interpretation of a conversation between the writer (ghost writer Andrew O'Hagan) and me.

"It is entirely uncorrected or fact-checked by me," he added.

Extracts from the book appeared in Thursday's edition of British newspaper *The Independent*.

In the first published excerpts, Assange describes his early days as a hacker and his first run-ins with the law and claims that he may be autistic.

"When I became well known, people would enjoy pointing out that I had Asperger's or else that I was dangling somewhere on the autistic spectrum. Let's just say I am; all hackers are," one extract published in the *Independent* revealed.

Further passages document Assange's teenage experiences of hacking into the US government's defence network, describing it as "like being able to teleport yourself into the interior of the Pentagon in order to walk around and take charge."

The publisher said Assange had spent more than 50 hours sitting for interviews for the book at a friend's country house in eastern England where he is staying under strict bail conditions.

"We disagree with Julian's assessment of the book. We believe it explains both the man and his work, underlining his commitment to the truth," it added.

*The Independent* said on its website that an entire chapter was dedicated to explaining his side of the allegations against him in Sweden, his first full account of the events in which he is accused of sexually assaulting two women.

"I have kept my own counsel about the matter until now," it quotes him as saying in the book.

"It will be difficult to keep anger out of this account, owing to the sheer level of malice and opportunism that have driven the case against me, but I want to make this argument as much as possible in a spirit of understanding."

Assange said he had been warned by a source in an unnamed intelligence agency that the US government had been planning to set him up, while he says the women were also angered that he had not returned the phone calls because he was busy.

The book also features diatribes against Britain's *The Guardian* and the *New York Times*, the former partners of WikiLeaks in its release of thousands of US diplomatic cables before the site fell out with the two newspapers.

*Source: AFP*

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