



A federal judge has ruled that the US government may demand that three associates of Julian Assange hand over Twitter account information in the criminal investigation into Wikileaks.

The three users of the social network had appealed against an earlier ruling. Their legal team had argued the request was a violation of their constitutional rights of free speech and association.

The judge ruled that those freedoms do not shield members from complying with legitimate government investigations.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the rights group which represented the Twitter users, said they planned to appeal against the ruling. The three people concerned are Icelandic MP Birgitta Jonsdottir, Dutch hacker Rop Gonggrijp and US computer programmer Jacob Appelbaum.

A law that allows investigators to procure electronic data without a search warrant was invoked to demand information from the accounts of several Twitter users who are associates of Julian Assange.

The government order did not relate to Twitter messages but rather it sought to obtain internet protocol (IP) addresses and account details.

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