

(Reuters) - A computer hacker who has spent much of his life on the road, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is a champion of free speech who has paradoxically fought demands to be more open about his own personal life and financial affairs. The 40-year-old Australian has made powerful enemies: governments whose secret information he has revealed by publishing hundreds of thousands of diplomatic cables as well as former colleagues he has alienated.

London's High Court ruled Wednesday that Assange should be extradited to Sweden for questioning over alleged sex crimes after accusations by two former WikiLeaks volunteers in 2010.

Swedish prime minister Fredrik Reinfeldt had damaged Assange's chances of a fair trial by portraying him as "public enemy number one," a lawyer for Assange said in February.

DIVISIVE FIGURE

Like the WikiLeaks site itself, Assange has proved a divisive figure. Some see him as a hero, challenging censorship and the harbinger of a new age of openness. Others see him as a dangerous radical, wrecking the secretive norms of diplomacy, revealing what should not be revealed.

While preaching the need for official openness, Assange is known for being highly secretive about himself.

He tried to suppress publication of his own autobiography earlier this year after falling out with a Scottish publisher midway through a \$1 million deal.

Nick Davies, publishing director of Canongate, said Assange felt the book was "too personal" and that Assange himself had later declared: "All memoir is prostitution."

Assange has found his relations with women exposed to public scrutiny this year as he fights extradition proceedings.

At one hearing, a defense lawyer said he did not dispute that the two women in the case found Assange's "sexual behavior in these encounters disreputable, discourteous, disturbing or even pushing toward the boundaries of what they were comfortable with."