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How a US extradition bid over Hamas allegations put a wealthy activist before a Spanish court

美國以哈馬斯相關指控提出引渡請求，富有的活動人士在西班牙出庭

難度 高階 · IELTS 7-8 · TOEFL 5-6 · KAOYAN 65-80 · CET-6 500-550+



圖片: The Guardian

A two-hour hearing in Spain's high court Friday on the US extradition request of wealthy leftwing activist and philanthropist James "Fergie" Chambers turned out to be a study in contrasts.

Chambers's defense took most of the session to query the US citizen and detail irregularities in the Trump administration's extradition request - several of which the Guardian has reported on - as well as the figures of Spanish law that would lead the three-judge panel to deny the request; while the prosecutor sped through his case, head down, asking Chambers no questions at all.

Notably, neither the judges or the prosecutor asked Chambers to address the insinuation in the extradition request that the wealthy activist had supported Hamas. Chambers's case is the first known instance of the US seeking to extradite a citizen over alleged support for Hamas, an accusation apparently tied to an international money laundering charge and donations to organizations helping Palestinians in Gaza.

重點詞彙

24 詞條

sanctions*
n 制裁

extradition
n 引渡

humanitarian*
adj 人道主義的

alleged*
adj 被指控的

testimony*
n 證詞

conspiracy*
n 共謀

fragmented*
adj 零散的

asserted*
v 斷言

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But the defense's queries did allow him to speak for the first time since his 10 July arrest in Ibiza about events at the center of the case: 2023 protests against Israeli weapons manufacturer Elbit in Massachusets and New Hampshire and 2024 transfers of $7.2m to Tunisia, where he lived at the time. The latter was buttressed with testimony from a financial expert.

On the whole, Chambers painted a picture different from the depiction contained in the extradition request, that of a violent backer of Hamas on the run from the US. At one point, he noted that his family's next door neighbor in Tunis was the US ambassador.

The court will decide next week on extraditing Chambers. If the decision is affirmative, Spain's council of ministers can reverse the court's decision. This means Chambers's extradition may be among the last decisions made under Pedro Sánchez, the socialist prime minister, before national elections on 29 November.

Friday's hearing began with Chambers's defense asking about his wealth. A self-described communist and anti-imperialist, Chambers sold stock back to his family's business, Atlanta-based Cox Enterprises, worth about $250m in mid-2023.

Then he started a foundation, he told the court. He and the foundation's three-member board decide on funding and ensure that no projects seeking support are under US sanctions, Chambers said. The foundation has funded an estimated 100 progressive and humanitarian projects in 20 countries, according to his partner, activist and actor Stella Schnabel - including, Chambers said Friday, organizations in Gaza working on issues such as "medical treatment for children, transportation out of dangerous areas and clean water and food".

Two of the request's three charges - riot and conspiracy to riot - are related to the late-2023 protests against Elbit.

Chambers detailed his participation in the protests: locking himself to a door, marching in the street and - in New Hampshire - standing in the road, speaking to the media and paying bail for four protesters who were eventually found guilty of misdemeanor charges and served 30 days in jail.

As for the $7.2m, the defense and a financial expert serving as a witness laid out how ten bank transfers from the US to Tunisia mostly went to sponsor the football club Club Africain - described by Chambers as "one of the largest football clubs in Africa" - and a sporting business Chambers launched while living in Tunisia.

"Is there any indication that the money went to support terrorist activities?" asked defense attorney Aitor Martínez. "None," said

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24 詞條

disturbance*
n 擾亂

irregularities*
n 違規之處

philanthropist
n 慈善家

depiction
n 描述

laundering
n 洗錢

affirmative
adj 肯定的

misdemeanor
n 輕罪

destined
adj 預定用於

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financial expert Albert Deulofeu Schilt.

Then, in about 15 minutes of rapid-fire monotone, prosecutor Juan Hernández Villalba laid out a wholly different picture of Chambers as backing “an organized structure … aimed at repeatedly committing illegal acts … together with funds destined for terrorist organizations”.

He accused the defense of laying out the facts of the case “in a fragmented way … when what’s most relevant is an evaluation of the whole picture”.

“The extradition petition isn’t based on ideology or political statements, but on actions [Chambers] organized, financed and carried out, causing material damage,” Hernández Villalba asserted.

The actions against Elbit “were presented as a simple protest”, he said. “Nevertheless, the actions described by the US were planned for days … with objectively violent content.”

Given all this, the prosecutor said, “there are more than enough indications to consider … that [Chambers’s] funding was aimed at terrorism”.

Among the 100-plus people in varying time zones following Friday’s hearing on the court’s YouTube channel was Irish film-maker and journalist Sinéad O’Shea, whose documentary on Chambers called All About the Money makes its New York premiere this weekend . It covers the time period cited by the FBI affidavit underpinning the US request. O’Shea said that extradition case “builds a false narrative which begins with the protest in New Hampshire - a piece of vandalism at worst and for which people ended up serving 30 days. I saw myself the football club in which he invested in Tunisia and his donations to Palestinian and other charities are a matter of public record. It is impossible not to see this as a politically motivated case.”

Chambers’s views have been extensively profiled in US media. A week after the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel, he postedon X about Israel’s response: “Stop calling it ‘collective punishment’/There’s nothing to be ‘punished’ for/No faction of the Palestinian resistance, Hamas or other, has done *anything* wrong/It’s simply genocide/Like it has been.”

Dressed in dark jeans, a grey-blue shirt, a black jacket, with a close-cropped haircut and mustache, Chambers got the last word during the hearing.

“To this day I cannot understand why I have been in prison since July for what amounts to speaking emotionally and committing minor offenses of public disturbance,” he said.

“I’ve never had any contact with any terrorist organization. I’ve

重點詞彙

24 詞條

affidavit
n 宣誓證詞書

vandalism
n 故意破壞

genocide
n 種族滅絕

court
n. 法院；法庭

address
v. 應對；處理

law
n. 法律

minister
n. 部長

citizen
n. 公民

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certainly never financed any terrorist organization … and for this my family has been torn apart. I missed my grandmother's funeral last week. My five-year-old son asks where I am every day. And my wife will give birth, God willing, in March - and I don't know if I will be by her side."

"[All] because I have spoken my mind, and I had a lot more money than others who have spoken their mind, in my country. And that's all it amounts to."

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