

## **Jho Low hints at asylum offer by European country**

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Fugitive Low Taek Jho has hinted he was offered asylum by a country in Europe in August last year “based on political persecution”.

Low, who is more popularly known as Jho Low, told Singapore’s Straits Times (ST) that the country in question adheres to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

He did not, however, name the country.

He further refused to divulge his current whereabouts to the online publication due to “serious personal safety concerns”.

“However, I can confirm that I was offered asylum in August 2019, by a country that acts by the principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights based on the political persecution to which I have been subjected and the continuing violation of my

human rights.

“All countries bound by these treaties are to act following their treaty obligations,” he was quoted saying in the interview published today.

The ECHR is an international human rights treaty signed by 47 countries, part of the Council of Europe (CoE).

Cyprus is among the signatory member states. It was reported last November that Low had obtained a Cypriot passport.

It was also previously reported that Low, long claimed to be the mastermind behind the multi-billion dollar global 1MDB financial scandal, had obtained a passport from the Caribbean country of Saint Kitts and Nevis, which has since been terminated.

Malaysian police have claimed to know Low’s whereabouts but declined to reveal it. Malaysian police chief Abdul Hamid Bador, however, dismissed speculation the fugitive was in United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Low was also previously believed to be in China.

Abdul Hamid, who has initially promised to bring Low back to Malaysia to face 1MDB-related charges by the end of last year, accused other countries of failing to cooperate, even refusing to acknowledge the Penang-born businessperson had been in their countries, despite evidence.

Despite being on the run, Low has frequently issued statements through his lawyers, maintaining his innocence in the 1MDB affair.

Malaysian authorities have maintained that Low, together with former prime minister Najib Abdul Razak, misappropriated millions of ringgit through the sovereign fund and its former subsidiary SRC International.

Najib is currently standing trial for multiple charges related to 1MDB, with his defence maintaining it was Low who orchestrated the scam and that Najib, too, had been duped by the fugitive Low.

In the ST interview, Loh claimed charges against him were politically motivated.

“The repeated attacks on me are politically motivated and ignore basic human rights and fair judicial processes.

“Also, it is difficult to believe the Malaysian government is serious about

'guaranteeing' my safety, when at the same time senior officials and politicians have openly speculated about the use of kidnapping and other illegal operations to bring me to Malaysia; actions which contravene both international human rights and laws in foreign jurisdictions," he claimed.

However, Abdul Hamid (above) had previously asserted that Malaysia would adhere to the law and not resort to "James Bond" tactics of smuggling Low out of any country.

"We can invoke Amla (Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001) and seek assistance," the inspector-general of police said in May last year.

"But doing James Bond style by breaking the law of that country doesn't augur well with our approach.

"We are not going to do that. We are going to do it the proper, legal and transparent way."

Low also accused the Malaysian government of using his case as a diversion to remove the international focus away from the country's internal problems.

“Malaysia should respect its international treaty obligations as opposed to ignoring the rule of law and pursuing a diversionary strategy in the media to distract from the real problems in Malaysia, such as racism, diminishing respect on the international stage, and others,” Low reportedly said.

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