

# WikiLeaks' payment processor to sue card companies

December 9 2010, By RAPHAEL G. SATTER , Associated Press

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(AP) -- WikiLeaks' payment processor said Thursday that it was preparing to sue credit card companies Visa and MasterCard over their refusal to process donations to the secret-spilling website.

Andreas Fink, the CEO of Iceland's DataCell ehf, told The Associated Press that he would seek damages from the American financial companies over their decision to block [WikiLeaks](#) funds.

"It's difficult to believe that such a large company as [Visa](#) can make a political decision," Fink said in a telephone interview from Switzerland. In an earlier statement, his company had defended the WikiLeaks, saying that "it is simply ridiculous to think WikiLeaks has done anything criminal."

WikiLeaks has been under intense pressure since it began publishing some 250,000 U.S. State Department cables, with attacks on its websites and threats against its founder, [Julian Assange](#), who is now in a British jail fighting extradition to Sweden on sex crime allegations.

A host of U.S. Internet and financial companies have severed their links to the controversial website, some citing terms of use violations. Earlier this week, Visa and MasterCard said they would stop processing payments to WikiLeaks, although they have not offered a detailed explanation of why. Supporters have reacted with outrage - with many noting that unsavory organizations such as the American KKK and the far-right British National Party both claim to accept Visa and

MasterCard.

MasterCard has declined repeated requests for comment. Visa Europe Ltd. spokesman Simon Kleine said organizations could receive funds through Visa so long as they were legal and didn't breach the company's operating rules.

But he said that when issues arose "we need to ensure that they're in compliance with our operating rules and in compliance with local laws."

He declined to say what those issues were in WikiLeaks' case. "We investigate on a commercially confidential basis," he said.

Fink said that he was officially notified of the dual suspensions through Danish financial services company Teller, which runs part of the payment infrastructure. He said a team from Teller was on its way to Iceland to conduct what he described as "due diligence."

Meanwhile, he said, [credit card](#) donations to WikiLeaks were frozen at least until next week, something which he said was costing his company money.

"Not accepting any credit card authorizations is basically killing the business," he said. He did not specify the kinds of damages he was seeking.

Fink's statement comes as Internet payment company PayPal says it will return the money frozen in WikiLeaks' account to the foundation that was fundraising for it. In a blog post, PayPal Inc. defended its decision, which it denied had come as a result of lobbying from the U.S. government.

**More information:** <http://www.datacell.com/>

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