

WikiLeaks auctions memorabilia to raise funds

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Wikileaks founder Julian Assange holds a legal document as he addresses a press conference in central London, in July 2011. With its coffers empty because of the blocking of credit card payments by major operators including Visa and MasterCard, WikiLeaks is selling off what it bills as unique memorabilia to meet its running costs.

Fancy a signed version of a WikiLeaks diplomatic cable, or a sachet of coffee smuggled out of jail by Julian Assange? Then the cash-strapped whistleblowing website has the auction for you.

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In the first of four fundraisers which opened on auction website [eBay](#) at the weekend, £6,000 (6,863 euros, \$9,469) is the opening bid for the most expensive lot: one of only two laptop computers used to prepare the "Cablegate" release of tens of thousands of secret US diplomatic messages.

A copy of a cable describing US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's orders to spy on the United Nations, signed and fingerprinted by WikiLeaks founder Assange, starts at £2,100.

Tickets to Vivienne Westwood's Spring/Summer 2012 fashion show in Paris later this month -- donated by the British fashion designer at Assange's 40th birthday party earlier this year, held while he was under house arrest -- open at £850.

But the most bids by late Monday were for a sealed prison coffee packet smuggled out of Wandsworth Prison in London by Assange on December 17, after he spent a week there fighting extradition to Sweden on rape charges.

Nine bidders pushed the price from £200 to £250.

WikiLeaks said proceeds from the auctions would not go towards Assange's own legal battle against extradition, adding: "The money raised will be used exclusively to support WikiLeaks' right to publish."

The first auction ends on Thursday.

In June WikiLeaks auctioned off a chance to dine with Assange to raise funds as it struggled to finance its activities following the ban on payments via Visa, MasterCard and PayPal imposed in December.

None of the card companies has spelled out its reasons for blocking

transactions after Wikileaks released a huge cache of documents in December.

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