

WikiLeaks 'back open for donations' after banking blockade

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"After almost two years of fighting an unlawful banking blockade by US financial giants VISA and MasterCard, WikiLeaks has announced it is back open for donations," the website said in a statement.

It aims to use Carte Bleue, a French affiliate of Visa, to beat the blockade and raise a million euros (\$1.2 million), which it says it needs immediately if the website set up by [Julian Assange](#) is to continue

operating.

"VISA and MasterCard are contractually barred from directly cutting off merchants through the Carte Bleue system," the website said.

"WikiLeaks advises all global supporters to make use of this avenue immediately before VISA/MasterCard attempts to shut it down."

Visa and MasterCard banned payments to WikiLeaks in December 2010 along with other money transfer companies including PayPal and [Western Union](#), forcing the website to drastically scale back its publication of secret documents.

The blockade was introduced when WikiLeaks began publishing 250,000 secret US diplomatic cables, embarrassing Washington and governments around the world. The website said it had cut off more than 95 percent of its donations.

WikiLeaks claims the [blockade](#) has cost it more than \$20 million (16 million euros) and left it covering just 21 percent of its operating costs for 2011.

Wednesday's announcement comes after an Icelandic court ruled last week that Valitor, the company formerly known as Visa Iceland that handles Visa and MasterCard payments in the country, must allow payments to [WikiLeaks](#).

Assange has been holed up in the Ecuadorian embassy in London since June 19, seeking political asylum in a bid to avoid extradition to Sweden, where he is wanted for questioning over alleged [sex crimes](#).

The Australian ex-[computer hacker](#) said in a statement: "We beat them in Iceland and, by God, we'll beat them in France as well."

"Let them shut it down. Let them demonstrate to the world once again their corrupt pandering to Washington. We're waiting. Our lawyers are waiting."

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