WikiLeaks Data Exposes HIV and Hepatitis Status

Published info on innocent citizens also includes Social Security numbers and sexual orientation.

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WikiLeaks was founded as a giant digital library where leaked documents could be posted in efforts to fight corruption, war and spying. But an increasing number of ordinary citizens are finding that they are collateral damage, as data dumps on WikiLeaks reveal sexual assault victims and people living with HIV and hepatitis and divulge myriad other personal details, The Associated Press reports.

Some of the information could ruin people's lives—and even get them killed. For example, WikiLeaks has published data that identifies gay men in Saudi Arabia, where homosexuality is punishable by death.

Looking at WikiLeaks files, the AP found dozens of cables that revealed sensitive information of private citizens, including telephone numbers and addresses, divorce filings, financial records (who was deeply in debt), whether a wife was a virgin when married and whether a husband was faithful (or infertile). Some records revealed the partners of women who had HIV and hepatitis C.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who was most recently in the news regarding the organization's publication of emails from the Democratic National Committee, did not answer questions posed by the AP. But it appears WikiLeaks does not properly vet or redact the information it publishes.

WikiLeaks has said, via Twitter, that withholding any data at all "legitimizes the false propaganda of 'information is dangerous.'"

That attitude is drawing criticism from people who used to champion WikiLeaks for its original goals of promoting transparency and fighting corruption.

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