

Protesters speak out in defence of Julian Assange

Our reporters
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The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to a number of those protesting outside Westminster Magistrates Court to demand the release and freedom of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

Sam said, “I don’t really go out on the streets to protest, but this case really scares me because of the way the media and the people are being controlled by the politicians and bankers. The reaction of these governments is to clamp down on WikiLeaks.

“They are suppressing transparency and transparency is essential for a functioning democracy and it’s also essential for peace. In the past, if we had the transparency that we now have with WikiLeaks there would have been fewer wars.

“What they are trying to do is deny people a balanced understanding, about what politicians are really doing in the world. We need transparency so that people can understand each other in different countries.

“The leaks speak for themselves. Where I think attention needs to be raised is the reaction of the regimes in the Western countries, to clamp down on freedom of speech. This is exactly what they criticise many Eastern countries for. And here we see it in our own countries in the West. It is complete hypocrisy and double standards.

“If they are able to take Julian away, you can already see the consequences. The media is already reporting less and less about the leaks. It’s reporting less about the case of Julian Assange. And he is also being increasingly portrayed as an outcast. They are saying he doesn’t have a normal lifestyle, that he is un-American, unpatriotic and so on.

“This misses the really important point—the government, via the media, are denying people knowledge of what they are doing even though they are supposedly elected by us. They are supposed to be accountable to us and for that accountability to function we need to have transparency.

“After the initial sensation of the first releases, a lot of the media stopped reporting the leaks, even though there is a lot of important information about how countries are run. And in some cases the media actually undertook a character assassination, by attacking Julian’s lifestyle. What they are doing is showing that this is what will happen to those who try to expose what these governments are doing.

“And if people can understand what their government is doing, they can understand that wars are fought between governments and not between people. And when people see this, they will see there are no rational reasons for war anymore. That is why I think Julian Assange should be given the Nobel Peace Prize.”

Sarah said, “As far as I am concerned he is a political prisoner. The Swedish prosecutor originally threw out the evidence. I am surprised at its actions because it is normally a lot more liberal country than this. So I want to know where the pressure is coming from.

“I am ashamed of my government and I am ashamed of America and I want to see change. I have never demonstrated before, but this matters so much that I have driven all the way from North Yorkshire to make a stand.

“Last night I went to see the new John Pilger film, *The War You Don't See*. And it was really good. I was

thinking after I saw it, what can I do? Then someone in the audience, via a link-up to John Pilger in London, asked him that question. He said, well you should turn up tomorrow. The whole second half of the film is pretty much about WikiLeaks. The build-up is about the spurious reasons for going to war, the number of casualties and the way war is changing. The second includes an interview with Julian Assange, which is very good. I think it is a life changing film and everyone should see it.

“All I know is that we have to stand, up, to be seen and to be heard. On the film last night it shows how the media just took the propaganda about the Iraq war and churned it out for us like a sausage machine. When the 2 million people marched against the war in 2003, just 3 percent of the BBC coverage was about the protesters. All the rest was coverage about going to war.

“I tried to donate to WikiLeaks and I couldn’t on PayPal. So I tried through my bank and I couldn’t through either of my Visa cards. I am disgusted that my bank is telling me where I can spend my money.”

Jose from Spain said, “These so-called charges are not what they really want him for. What they want is to censor him. Those who are against WikiLeaks just want some more time. They know that nobody will believe this so-called rape thing. They are just one big excuse. I mean, how do you explain the timing of it, at the same time as all these cables have come out?”

Artema Starcy, a student at BPP University College in London, said, “I definitely think these charges are politically motivated. It is really spurious on the part of the Americans. I think that Julian Assange is a political prisoner effectively.

“I am studying law in London and I came by myself today. I am really interested in human rights and I think this case is really high profile, but has issues that are so important for us all. They are trying to cover up for what they have done by shooting the messenger. That is exactly what they are doing.

“It is difficult to tell whether he will be extradited or not, whether the European Arrest Warrant will go through or not. A lot of my colleagues from school are strong advocates about this. They think that all charges should be dropped. They think it’s just a legal circus

that really shouldn’t be happening.”

Jean Sullivan said, “I am here because I think this is disgusting. We are supposed to pride ourselves on the fact that we have free speech and democracy. Well, WikiLeaks is all about free speech.

“The public are being dumbed down with reality TV and soap operas. We are not told anything. And they have killed thousands, if not millions of people with lies. Now the truth is coming out and we have every right to know about it.

“I think this trumped-up charge of molestation really needs to be looked deeper into, because I suspect there is somebody behind that. We haven’t got democracy, it’s a fallacy. I think the freedom of the Internet is under threat. There is a danger that we will be closed down more and more. I just came through Parliament Square and it looks very reminiscent of a police state. What are we talking about here? We are supposed to be very democratic, for goodness sake.”



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