

Protesters denounce legal persecution of Assange

Our reporters
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The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to a number of those protesting at the High Court in London, supporting the release of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, including documentary filmmaker John Pilger.

Pilger addressed the press outside the court. He said, “I think there are politics in this case. Although that judge in there said this has nothing to do with WikiLeaks, he knows damn well it’s got everything to do with WikiLeaks. What went unspoken in court is the real possibility of extradition to the United States.

“Eric Holder, the attorney general, has made it clear that he is out to invent, literally invent, a law by which to prosecute Julian Assange. There is no law at the moment. He has gone to the Espionage Act that goes back to the First World War. America is meant to be land of the First Amendment. Julian Assange has committed no crime, as far as the United States law stands at the moment. And in the age of Guantanamo, post 9/11, there is every possibility that he will make one up.

“All of this was unnecessary. Julian Assange offered, in Sweden and in this country, to meet the prosecutor, to answer her questions. He has never been formally charged. He still hasn’t been charged, even though they want to extradite him. So it could have been resolved without these court proceedings.

“He left Sweden with the permission of the Swedish authorities. And then they sent an Interpol Red Alert extradition order after him.”

The *World Socialist Web Site* asked Pilger if he was any clearer from the court appeal whether it was the Swedish authorities or the British who were pushing for Assange to be denied bail. He answered, “It’s hard to know who was actually pushing it. But the Crown Prosecution Service were certainly enthusiastic in their prosecution of this. So why are they doing that? That is a good question for them. Why are they wasting taxpayers’ money pursuing something that on the face of it is almost a charade?

“A senior prosecutor throws it out. Someone intervenes and then they start it up again. Assange offers to meet the

prosecutor. They don’t want to see him. He asks permission to leave the country. He gets it. They follow him with an Interpol red alert. What’s going on?”

Verena is originally from Austria, but now lives in London. She said, “I am part of a small group of people who are working on a web site in order to help Julian. I was supposed to start a job, but I postponed it because I had to do this. In 20 years, I want to be able to look back and say, ‘I did something. I didn’t just stand back’. I just couldn’t look in the mirror in the morning and do nothing.

“They are here today because the case involves the United States. If it was some smaller country involved, Assange would be out by now. The countries involved in holding him just want to distract from the real issues that this is all about.

“We can now really see what so-called free speech is, here in Europe. We don’t really have it. I was shocked to hear that the UK Crown Prosecution Service were the ones trying to keep him in jail. I thought the British legal system had some spine. One country, the US, pretty much has control of the whole world. I am not anti-American at all, but this is now ridiculous.

“The US should give a statement on the video film showing their helicopter shooting the civilians and kids in Iraq. They should be concentrating on looking into that instead of these fake rape charges.”

Mark, an IT consultant, said, “I think that Sweden has come out and said they don’t have any opposition to the bail themselves, so for the UK Crown Prosecution Service to want to continue to hold him in jail is completely unjustified. It makes me ashamed to be British today.

“This case was dismissed back in August, and under any normal circumstances for a case to be brought back up, with nothing new introduced, would be considered completely unacceptable. But in this case the government and media seem to think it is perfectly acceptable to jump onto something that should have been thrown out. He should have been a free man. I think it is very clear to see there is a political motivation here.”

Angel is from Bulgaria and is now living in London. He

said, “Julian Assange is doing nothing wrong. He is just showing the world what is really happening. What we have now, as Julian’s case shows, is not a democracy. There is not the freedom of speech to tell the world what has really happened.

“I suspected all the time that Britain was involved in keeping him in jail. I suspected that Britain, Sweden and the United States were all working together. Fortunately, Julian has a lot of supporters all around the world.

“I cannot accept what these politicians around the world are saying against Julian. I can’t accept there could be a future president of the United States, Sarah Palin, threatening Julian Assange. He is not a terrorist. This makes you think about who is a terrorist. The people of Iraq, Afghanistan and other places are not terrorists.

“What could happen to me tomorrow if we are talking about problems in the world and I say something wrong against the government or the politicians? Ordinary people can no longer feel like they can say what they want to about what is wrong. Look what is happening in the world. There are protests here, in Rome, in Greece. We have to change what is wrong.”

Monika is studying art and design. She said, “I think this case shows how corrupt governments are. The Swedish government says they are not involved, but they are. It is shocking that Sweden and the UK will dance for the US and be its puppets.

“A lot of people want to have free speech and we cannot be silenced.... So I think WikiLeaks is really making a big step forward towards a real media. What a small group of activists have done in just four years is brilliant.

“I don’t think this is over. They are still making threats against him. If he dies or gets assassinated, I think people are going to fight back. We feel very, very strongly.”

Rose said, “We do not want to see an innocent man be made an example of to suit the political agenda of the United States. It’s quite clear with the cables WikiLeaks has released and the ‘collateral deaths’ video released before, that we have finally got to see things that we are never allowed to see. It has opened a lot of people’s eyes as to what is going on. Before that, people had suspicions, but now we have the proof. That is what the cables are affording us. They are giving us an insight into the corruption, the deceit and just how power-mad they are.

“We are seeing how they work behind closed doors. We know that these governments are trying very hard to shut down WikiLeaks. And I suspect they will try to shut down parts of the Internet.”

Anna said, “The real criminals are Hillary Clinton and people like her. Who is looking into their crimes? Nobody is, because they have the power and the money. It is time for

the power to switch around to the people, which is where it should be.

“I am disgusted by the calls by politicians to have Julian tracked down. If I said something like that about any politician, I would have problems with the government and the police. I had thought the prosecution lawyers were acting on the Swedish government’s behalf, but then I heard this morning that the British authorities may be acting on their own agenda. It just shows how much corruption is going on at the moment. They must be so arrogant to openly do these things and not think anything is going to happen to them.”

Sharron said, “We represent the Justice for Assange campaign. I think this is a travesty of justice. This is a court hearing simply about somebody who is wanted for questioning. It seems quite bizarre to go to all of these lengths to get someone who is quite happy to be questioned and has made several attempts to be questioned.

“The idea that he won’t get bail, because they are trying to argue that he will flee, is ridiculous. The man has surrendered his passport. He is going to be giving thousands and thousands of pounds worth of bail from friends. This man has got a lot of integrity, and he is not going to let his friends down. He has to report to the police station. He is going to wear an electronic tag. I mean he is the most recognisable man in the world at this point.

“I found it very intriguing that it’s the British prosecution that are also trying to push this through. I have never heard of that happening before. So not only are the Swedes out to get him, the US is out to get him and the British are out to get him.

“There is nothing about this case that is normal. There is nothing that smacks of normal justice. As Mark Stephens said, it is a persecution, not a prosecution.”



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