

The persecution of WikiLeaks' Julian Assange

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The American state, its spokesmen in the mass media, and its allies around the world are engaged in an international campaign of vilification and persecution against WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange.

This campaign has nothing to do with any supposed crime he has committed, since he has committed none. He is the target of an international manhunt for his role in lifting the lid on the lies and criminal operations of imperialist powers the world over—above all, in the United States.

The same mafia-type criminality is now being deployed with full force against WikiLeaks and Private Bradley Manning, who is charged with leaking some of the documents. In the US, politicians of both parties are united in their determination to see Assange arrested. The Obama administration has branded the leakers, as well as WikiLeaks, “criminals,” with the US attorney general pledged to “close the gap” by inventing a pseudo-legal basis for prosecution if one does not exist at present.

Former presidential candidate Mike Huckabee and ex-military officials have demanded the death penalty for Manning, while Sarah Palin has insisted that WikiLeaks be branded a terrorist organization.

Washington's junior partners abroad have been equally adamant in their attack. Tom Flanagan, a former adviser to the Canadian prime minister, declared that Assange should be “assassinated,” that Obama should “put out a contract and maybe use a drone or something.” And the fact that Assange is a citizen of Australia did not prevent Julia Gillard, the prime minister of that country, from declaring, without any evidence, that Assange's actions were “illegal,” while placing her government at the service of the US witch-hunt.

Assange faces the immediate threat of arrest on the basis of trumped-up charges in Sweden. On Thursday, Swedish authorities obtained a new arrest warrant on alleged sexual misconduct charges—invariably, and

falsely, described in the mass media as “rape.” The charges were initially considered so specious that the prosecutor ordered them dropped. This decision was reversed, however, and Sweden on Thursday submitted a warrant to Interpol. Police in Britain—where Assange is believed to be located—have pledged his arrest, which could happen as early as today.

There can be no doubt that the charges leveled against Assange in Sweden are only a convenient pretext to seek his detention.

Indeed, among the more revealing documents posted so far by WikiLeaks is one from the US ambassador to Sweden, who notes that Sweden's close ties to the United States military “give the lie to the official policy” of non-participation in military alliances. In what has begun to emerge as a theme in the released cables from the US State Department, the ambassador warns that these ties should not be revealed because this would “open up the government to domestic criticism.”

The documents obtained by WikiLeaks—only a small fraction of which have been released so far—help expose what is a permanent conspiracy against the democratic rights of the world's population: from covering up US bombings of civilians in Yemen, to working behind the scenes to obstruct the prosecution of CIA agents guilty of torture, to spying on UN officials in violation of international treaties.

Those who are leading the campaign against WikiLeaks are themselves responsible for horrific atrocities. In the face of allegations from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that WikiLeaks had placed lives in danger, Assange gave an appropriate response in an interview with *Time* magazine. WikiLeaks, he noted, “has never caused an individual ... to come to any sort of physical harm or to be wrongly imprisoned and so on. That is a record compared to the organizations that we are trying to expose who have literally been involved in the deaths of hundreds or

thousands or, potentially over the course of many years, millions.”

This criminality continues, now under the Obama administration. One document released by WikiLeaks that has been virtually ignored in the media is particularly revealing. In the spring of 2009, the Obama administration, in alliance with top figures in the Republican Party, intervened to pressure the Spanish government to derail an investigation into torture carried out by the Bush administration.

At one point, a representative of the US embassy, together with former chairman of the Republican Party Mel Martinez, met with the acting Spanish Foreign Minister to insist that “the prosecutions would not be understood or accepted in the US and would have an enormous impact” on US-Spanish relations. The prosecutions were quickly scuttled.

If the actions of WikiLeaks have helped reveal, in real time, the lies of the American government, they have also exposed the role of the chief propagators of these lies: the American media. For decades, the US government has cultivated the media to the point where it engages in self-censorship as a matter of course, where it does not even blush to declare itself “embedded” with this or that military unit or other state body.

The major newspapers regularly clear major articles with the White House and the Pentagon, delaying stories that could be politically harmful. Now, what is supposedly a central obligation of the media—to expose government secrets and provide information to the population—is treated by the media itself as if it were a criminal enterprise.

The mainstream media has long been concerned in particular about the potential of the Internet to allow people to access information unfiltered through official channels. There can be no doubt that the WikiLeaks revelations will provide further impetus to the campaign by the US government to assert greater control over online networks.

The WikiLeaks web site has already been the target of repeated denial of service attacks, of suspicious origin. In an attempt to get WikiLeaks back online, the organization rented servers from Amazon. On Wednesday, Amazon blocked WikiLeaks from using its servers, apparently under pressure from US officials and staff members of Democrat turned Independent Senator Joseph Lieberman, chairman of the Homeland Security Committee.

The state persecution of Assange—enthusiastically backed by the mass media—is one expression of a far-

reaching decay of democracy in the United States and internationally. World governments, led by the United States, are carrying out deeply unpopular policies—the multi-trillion dollar bailout of financial institutions, relentless demands for social austerity and the expanding war and global plunder.

The constant proclamations about the need for secrecy, which WikiLeaks has violated by publishing government documents, arises fundamentally from the irreconcilable conflict between the social interests that these governments represent and the needs and aspirations of the vast majority of the population.

The persecution of Assange in an effort to silence this exposure is not simply a threat to one individual. The methods employed against WikiLeaks will be used against all opposition to the policies of the corporate and financial aristocracy.

The *World Socialist Web Site* demands an immediate halt to the campaign against WikiLeaks and Julian Assange. All the documents WikiLeaks has in its possession should be released for the world to see.

In the final analysis, the hysterical witch-hunt against Assange and WikiLeaks is not any sign of strength on the part of the American ruling elite and its state, but rather of fear and weakness. Intensely conscious of the crisis and instability of the political and economic system, they fear that revelations of state crimes will only fuel the inevitable eruption of mass working class opposition to their reactionary policies in the US and around the world. It is this emerging movement of social struggles on a global scale that must undertake an implacable defense of Assange, WikiLeaks and all those who seek to drag the crimes and conspiracies of imperialism into the light of day.

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