

WikiLeaks supporters protest threatened extradition of Julian Assange

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The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to a number of protesters on Tuesday demanding the release of Julian Assange. The WikiLeaks founder was appearing at Belmarsh magistrates' court, sitting at Woolrich Crown Court in southwest London, for a preliminary hearing on the extradition warrant issued against him by Sweden's public prosecutor.

The hearing was being held prior to a full extradition hearing in Assange's case set for February 7 and 8. He is being held under virtual house arrest on £240,000 bail. (See "Warning from lawyers for Julian Assange: WikiLeaks founder faces "real risk" of rendition to US, torture and death")

Justina travelled to the protest from Spain. She is part of the Free WikiLeaks European Union group. She said, "If Julian Assange is extradited, any one of us can be extradited. It is very worrying for everybody.

"We have quite a lot of people in the Spanish group. We have focused on human rights and getting Assange free and making sure the WikiLeaks page is free. We think this is a persecution, and it is very worrying. We have people joining our group from South American countries and from Portugal, too.

"We had our first protest in December. We protested in several cities over two days. Last Saturday, the group organised protests in 16 confirmed towns and cities. This Saturday, there will global protests in which we will organise with the Australians, the Canadians and the Americans. It's important that many people in Britain also join in these protests.

"People can contact the London support group in Britain and organise events in other towns and cities."

Justine said that she had read the WikiLeaks cables published in the Spanish media. "They have focussed on the Spanish and South American cables. I can see in the cables that have been released about the Spanish

politicians that they are behaving very shamefully. It is outrageous how they worked to prevent any prosecutions in the case of José Couso, the journalist who died in Iraq. Our government delayed and delayed it. They were talking to the United States embassy about it, and it was outrageous.

"We are reading the cables, published in Spain, in the US and also what the *Guardian* is publishing in Britain. Most of the cables are very important and interesting. I think it outrageous that those who are after Assange are now pursuing a member of the Icelandic parliament."

Susan from London said she came to the demonstration after following the events surrounding the persecution of WikiLeaks for about a month. She said she came to the demonstration, "As I think we have the same values and ideals as Assange does, which are truth and honesty.

"I think people have now seen in black and white what people have been doing for years. And the governments, including the government here, are full of fear. For example, they are now trying to involve an Icelandic member of parliament. They are trying to get Twitter, Google and Facebook to hand over all the data of users.

"They should be looking into what is happening in their own countries, such as the shooting in Arizona the other day. I saw that this ex-aide of George Bush has been murdered, and the media don't seem to talk much about this. That is probably because it hides some really bad truth.

"They are saying that Assange has released names of people and put their lives in danger. But these countries are sending millions of people to war throughout their history. It seems like every year or every two years, they send people to die in wars, like in Afghanistan and Iraq, Vietnam.

“They seem to be trying to deflect attention from their own actions. When you had the shooting in Arizona, President Obama said that this shouldn’t happen in a free country. When I heard that, I had to giggle as America doesn’t seem to me to be a free society. If things like this happen, then things are really rotten in a society.”

Alan said, “I’m part of a Facebook group, Defend Julian Assange, that has 40,000 people. But we think that the group is being restricted by Facebook. The administrator cannot mail out to all the group.

“Facebook have just said the group has got too big. But there are many groups with 100,000 people, and there are a few groups with a million people. And they are being allowed to administer their own page and we can’t.

“I have been involved in issues around getting transparency in governments for some time. I saw the helicopter video in Iraq, and it was like kids playing with toys. The statistic that goes along with that is that 90 percent of the deaths in Iraq are civilian. What is going on? This needs to be highlighted. Iran is only around the corner from there, and we don’t want the same thing happening.

“I’ve looked at the Swedish legal process. The Swedish legal system is very different from ours. In the UK, the police do all the investigation and the prosecutors do the prosecution. But in Sweden, the prosecutors do all the prosecuting but they are also in charge of the investigation.

“I don’t think Sweden have the checks and balances in their process that we do here. In the Swedish legal system, the power is very much focussed on the prosecutors. It seems the accountability of prosecutors in Sweden is negligible. In this case, there is not enough accountability in the Swedish process.

“It’s really important because the Swedish legal process is very prone to being interfered with politically. So if you are going to set anyone up, Sweden is the ideal place to do it.

“I must admit that I’ve felt a bit resigned over politics, but I’ve been really awakened over this. I’ve felt very strongly about transparency for a long time, and I’m very keen on what WikiLeaks stands for. I think a lot of people are still asleep on these issues and need to wake up. Whatever wakes them up, if that is Julian Assange being a catalyst for them waking up,

which is my catalyst, then that is a way forward.”



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