

WikiLeaks has provided evidence of war crimes, say Assange supporters

Robert Stevens
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The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to some of those protesting outside the High Court in London Tuesday in support of Julian Assange.

Among these were Ben Griffin, a former Iraq war veteran and former member of the British Special Air Services (SAS). In 2008, the previous Labour government took out a high court injunction to prevent Griffin from revealing further details about the government's involvement in "extraordinary rendition". (See "Britain: Labour government gags 'extraordinary renditions' whistleblower")

Griffin said, "I am here today to stand in solidarity with Julian Assange, who I see as a war resister. For years both I and other veterans in the UK and America have spoken out about the crimes committed in Iraq and Afghanistan; the civilian dead, the destruction of these countries. We've been silenced and ignored and we've been asked the question again and again: 'Where's your evidence? You're just disgruntled soldiers. Where's your evidence of these crimes?'"

"Julian has provided the evidence. The Iraq war logs, the Afghan war logs, Cablegate [the US diplomatic cables WikiLeaks has begun to release] and, most important, the Collateral Murder video have provided evidence of what veterans have been saying for years about these two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. So we are here today in solidarity with fellow war resisters.

"I'm also here to support Julian in this fight against extradition. I think it's wrong that a citizen can be taken from one jurisdiction where he speaks the language and understands the law to another jurisdiction where he doesn't understand the language and where he could face a secret trial. Not based on charges, not based on any hard evidence, but based on allegations.

"It's important for all of us citizens within the European Union to realise the nature of these European Arrest Warrants. Any one of us could be accused, have allegations made against us from any other EU country and be dragged from our home country, where we are resident, to these other countries. So it's really important what Julian is doing here today, fighting against that process.

"It's pretty obvious that all this legal action, having to be under house arrest and preparing for a case in the high court that takes up a lot of time and energy, is obviously taking a lot of time and energy from his important war resister work with WikiLeaks. So you could argue that the United States, Britain and Sweden have maybe colluded in this to tie Julian up. Tie him up in this legal process because then it decreases the amount of time and effort that they can put into deciphering the cables. I think there are 250,000 individual leaks and they have only got through about 20,000, so there is a lot of work to be done in court.

"I think the safest place for Julian to be is here in the UK. Despite

the mainstream media trying to sully his name and turn people against him, he has still got a great deal of support in this country. I don't think this is the case in Sweden or America. I think it would be a lot easier to try him in those countries, but not here."

Tim, a student, said, "We are here to show solidarity with Julian Assange because of the amount of work he has done to help fight against the war in Afghanistan and to stop that happening.

"We are also here to protest against the death threats made against his life by the ruling elites in America and to show that we are not going to let them get their way without a fight.

"Julian Assange has not been charged and is being held for seven months in house arrest. And as far as we know the women he is accused of assaulting haven't asked for it to go to trial. They haven't asked to press charges. So as well as an anti-war issue, there are civil liberties issues. It seems completely wrong that someone can go through that just on allegations made by a state and not even by normal people. We don't even know if he has done what he is accused of and it's quite likely he didn't.

"It's clearly suspicious. British police go around Europe all the time to speak to people in other countries. And yet the Swedish authorities have had seven months and not come here once. Even when he was in Sweden, he offered to be interviewed on a date which they refused. Surely if they take rape seriously as they should—and obviously they don't as there's only a 3 percent conviction rate for it—it's clear they don't give a damn about them.

"The reality is they haven't tried to interview him at all. It seems really malicious and they just seem to want to get him in a private court. I expect there is some legal loophole that we don't know about that they will then try to use to get him to America from Sweden. You've got to fight it at every step if you don't know what they're planning to do.

"I think regarding what Britain is doing, it has always been complicit with US crimes throughout our history. In the 1950s Britain evicted a whole population from the Chagos Islands and handed it to the US to use as an airbase, until today when they are cooperating to evict Julian Assange from the UK. They have never stood up to them. Actually Britain's rulers are the ones who invented the crimes in the first place and the US is a copycat.

"Julian Assange's work has meant so much to people. So many people who were sceptical about the wars, who thought maybe it was OK, that innocent people weren't getting hurt—now they are all clearly realising, no, it was absolutely wrong the crimes that have been done there.

"Recently there was the Royal Navy medic who has refused rifle training and was in jail for seven months in Plymouth. During his trial

he quoted WikiLeaks extensively and said that was one of his main reasons for realising that he doesn't want to cooperate with that.

"So it's clearly made a lot of difference to a lot of people. But the government wants to pretend that we're not in Afghanistan and pretend that everyone is behind it. But there are more people against the war in Afghanistan now than against the Iraq war before it happened. It's an issue that the government knows if it becomes public, they'll have a lot of opposition.

"It's no surprise that they are cutting off the donations to WikiLeaks. I think we should have expected that. These corporations rely on global exploitation to survive. WikiLeaks is basically opposed to them, even if not overtly. It's crazy that you can steal millions of pounds from an organisation, WikiLeaks, and get away with it—which is basically what they are doing."

Sam said, "WikiLeaks has still been operating to some extent, even with Julian Assange under house arrest. It was inevitable that the legal proceedings would drag on for some time as we go through a number of appeals and counter-appeals. Today is the appeal against the extradition at the high court, but after that there could be another appeal at the House of Lords or the Supreme Court or at the European court of human rights. It has been a long process and I think we've still got some way to go.

"I hope Assange's new legal team can bring greater force with their arguments. I don't know if they have so many new arguments, but the arguments that the defence has already presented are quite strong and they maybe need to be reinforced or elaborated on.

"In the extradition hearing last time, the judge basically dismissed the arguments of the defence. It was a very one-sided judgement, so on that basis alone there is every reason to pursue an appeal and have the case heard by a different judge."

Regarding the prevention of DataCell from processing payments for WikiLeaks, Sam said, "You can see that the big corporations and the big banks and military industrial complex continue to pursue Julian Assange, strangling them economically, obstructing them by judicial process and discrediting them in the media and using every instrument at their disposal to attack WikiLeaks.

"But there are also people supporting WikiLeaks and a number of independent outlets supporting WikiLeaks, so it's going to get more interesting going forward".

Donatas said, "I came to the court to support the people who are trying to make a change in the world, who are trying to break capitalism, who are trying to stop the wars all over the world and who are trying to stop the influence of the private mass media.

"I think WikiLeaks has made a huge change in the mass media environment because previously there were no such large media organisations that simply challenged all rotten criminal government organisations and corporations. There were some organisations previously, but while some single journalists were doing their job, they could be stopped one by one, in wars and other places.

"But now with WikiLeaks it is not possible to catch one person and take all the information. So WikiLeaks is very important because everyone who supports WikiLeaks is a part of WikiLeaks and they can simply share that information.

"What we are seeing is governments and criminals in client regimes who are simply doing everything to stop such progressive movements such as Julian Assange and WikiLeaks. And then there is Bradley Manning who, it is claimed, got the information for Julian. He is being tortured. He is being totally devastated by this torture.

"So that is why it is important to gather in this place to keep the

message going. I think we have to challenge those who say this will change nothing. This will change everything. There have been many attempts to bring the truth to the surface, but all those attempts were simply closed and banned. There was no Internet before, however, and now the technology is here where the truth can come out.

"This is not a democracy, this is a misleading democracy. So I think WikiLeaks has made a huge change because the information it has captured has been put in a lot of newspapers all around the globe. At least every second of the planet's citizens has got to know that something is definitely wrong."

Chiara is a supporter of the No Borders group. She said, "I'm supporting Julian Assange because he has done a lot of work exposing the lies surrounding the Iraq war and the Afghan wars. That is why they silenced him and put him in prison. There are ridiculous allegations of assault against the women that are allegations that don't stand up to scrutiny.

"The European Arrest Warrant system seems very wrong. How does it even find a place in European legislation? So someone who hasn't even been charged has got no protection? It could happen to anyone. There is no protection at all for someone who is the victim of these allegations.

"What they have done to him they can do to any of us. It is just because he is telling the truth about what the governments are doing. It is not because he is violent or a terrorist. He is just telling the truth about these wars and so anyone who is speaking the truth can be arrested and put away without charges".

Gerard, a student from Surrey, said, "I think this case started off as preposterous and got more and more preposterous as time has gone on. It's becoming more and more ridiculous. UK law is breaking European law. The European Arrest Warrant law is being broken. It's just a breach of human rights generally and it's not right."

Harry from Surrey said, "I've been following the Assange case from the beginning. I've been to most of these rallies and I just think it's a smear campaign that's turned ridiculous. If this goes through it's the end of freedom of information in the UK."

Harry spoke about the importance of the work WikiLeaks had done. Speaking of the "Collateral Murder" video it released in April 2010 that showed US forces killing civilians in July 2007, he said, "I think that was good as it brought WikiLeaks into the mainstream media. It made it almost feared by the government as it meant a move forward to governmental transparency.

"I think people have a lot more power now than they used to do due to new technology such as Facebook and Twitter. Everyone's networked and it's very beneficial, definitely."

Danny said, "It is ridiculous. It's getting to the point where they are just dealing with this like he's a bad lover. It's a like an episode of 'Jeremy Kyle' [UK daytime talk show] because they are just going through all these personal details.

"I saw that Visa is still blocking funding and there is a lot of pressure from government to pretty much stop WikiLeaks."



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