

“The Labor government just wants to shut Assange up”

Our reporters
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World Socialist Web Site reporters in Melbourne and Sydney spoke with those protesting against the British Supreme Court ruling on Julian Assange and the ongoing US-led campaign to destroy WikiLeaks.

In Melbourne, **Josh Ryan** said: “I’m just outraged and can’t believe we still have to protest against this kind of thing... Assange has been carrying out legal journalism. It’s the future of journalism, but what’s happening here will discourage anyone from doing that... WikiLeaks has exposed that the US is absolutely ruthless and I’m very afraid of what they will do next.

“The government just wants to shut Assange up, and as far as I’m concerned both the Greens and Labor are gutless. They aren’t prepared to support this man and the mainstream media is not properly reporting on Assange’s situation. They are scared of the consequences.”

Henry Louis said: “I’ve followed the attack on WikiLeaks from the beginning because I’m a believer in public freedom and freedom in the media. It’s very, very sad that Assange has no support from his own government.

“I believe Julia Gillard has been bought off by the Americans and that the US had something to do with the toppling of Rudd also. Rudd needed to be replaced by someone who was more pro-US.

“The campaign against Assange is about making an example of people who threaten to embarrass the US. ‘You threaten me—we put you away’ is what this is all about. Some members of US Congress made this clear and said that Assange should be killed.”

Judy Blackburn, an artist from rural Victoria said: “The Gillard government is supposed to be providing the sort of assistance to Assange due to any citizen in trouble overseas. The lawyer Jennifer Robinson, however, has said that behind the scenes diplomatic arrangements just aren’t happening in this case.

“Julia Gillard was on the media last night talking about mining, not about Julian Assange. She was trying to divert attention away from this issue, but 80 percent of Australians support Assange returning to Australia. Gillard is looking at her ties with the United States rather than his diplomatic rights as a citizen. She’s probably responding to pressure from the US.

“We need to get the message to Julian that there are a lot of people in Australia supporting him. I’ve given this some thought. From what I’ve heard on ABC Radio, major journals have published the same information as WikiLeaks but they haven’t been arrested or prosecuted. This is about human rights and principles.”

Sasha Zhook, a Monash University management and marketing student, said she decided to attend the demonstration because she believed in “a free and transparent society.”

“We need to live in a society where you can have free education and true knowledge so people can critically think for themselves and to understand who and what they are,” she explained. “Otherwise people are easily controlled by governments and corporations... The reason Julia Gillard is not defending Assange is because of the US government. They are slaves to what

the US wants. I don't think any of the governments will defend him because he's a threat to all of them—the people are the only ones who can defend him.”

Yvette, a sound recording student from the SAE Institute, said that WikiLeaks was “incredibly important because it is essentially playing a role that journalism should be filling, a role that reporters haven't done for a long time, and that is to investigate.”

Gillard had “no right” to say that Assange had broken the law, she noted: “It was inappropriate for a government to be making such legal statements, especially as he hasn't been charged yet for any crime. The government's relationship with the US is more important than the rights of any Australian citizen.”

In Sydney, **Rudd Soeriyadi**, a 21-year-old retail worker, said he had been following WikiLeaks for years and opposed the “vehement” campaign against Assange.

“The Gillard government is just enabling the US government to continue to carry out its methods across the world,” he said. “I definitely think that Julia Gillard's statement that WikiLeaks was an ‘illegal’ organisation was quite possibly a conscious decision to deter the working class from saying anything and being outspoken or leaking information.

“From my perspective the two major parties are roughly equal. I would like to see more of an independent party, one that better represents the people, because at the moment we don't really have much of an option.”

Andrew, a University of Sydney law student, denounced the Washington-led campaign against Assange. “I think it's a big sign—‘shut the hell up and toe the line’,” he said. “Branding Assange as a rapist is a way of undermining his message.”

He continued: “I was actually quite excited when Obama to come to power and he promised a lot of stuff, especially Wall Street reforms, but none of it eventuated. Now the US seems to be heading down the

path of a totalitarian government with a lot of new powers that are unconstitutional. Any act where you can extra-judicially take people and kill them or imprison them without charge is one of the hallmarks of a totalitarian system and it must be opposed.”

The authors also recommend:

Australian protests demand release of WikiLeaks founder

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