

Resolution of SEP (UK) Congress: “Defend Julian Assange and WikiLeaks”

9 January 2013

1. The Socialist Equality Party salutes the courageous stand of WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange and demands an end to their persecution. Assange and WikiLeaks are the victims of an international conspiracy in which the British government is playing a leading role. Its aim is to intimidate and silence all those who seek to counter the wall of official lies used to conceal or justify war crimes and conspiracies against the peoples of the world. We insist that the defence of Assange and WikiLeaks must be the spearhead of a campaign to safeguard basic democratic rights.

2. Assange is the victim of a transparent frame-up, concocted by the Swedish authorities in concert with Washington. The allegations of misconduct against him were made by two women who sought him out and consented to sex on a number of occasions over several days, including after the alleged incidents that led to their complaints. The women had initially gone to the police, after conferring with one another, to insist that Assange take an HIV test. They did not allege rape. An initial investigation was dropped and an arrest warrant against Assange cancelled because prosecuting authorities did not accept any “reason to suspect that he has committed rape.” A warrant was only reissued after the intervention of Swedish Chief Prosecutor Marianne Ny on September 1, 2010, on the pretext of questioning Assange.

3. Even now no charges have ever been laid against Assange. The arrest warrant is meant solely to provide a pseudo-legal basis for getting him to Sweden and to facilitate his subsequent transfer to the United States, where the Obama administration has had a secret Grand Jury indictment prepared since December 2010 under charges of treason. This has been facilitated by the Australian Labor government, which is conspiring with the US against one of its own citizens.

4. Due to the efforts by the British government and the judiciary, Assange has spent almost two years in prison or under house arrest, fighting extradition, only to see every appeal rejected right up to the Supreme Court. He would have already been extradited had he not been granted

diplomatic asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London on June 19, 2012. The Swedish authorities turned down an offer to question Assange on embassy grounds, proving that their intention is to hand him over to the US rather than investigate allegations of sexual misconduct.

5. Assange remains under immediate threat. Britain’s contempt for fundamental democratic principles and its naked imperialist arrogance were exemplified by the Conservative-led coalition government’s threat to withdraw recognition of the Ecuadorian Embassy and send police to storm its premises and seize Assange. Foreign Secretary William Hague baldly declared, “The United Kingdom does not recognise the principle of diplomatic asylum.”

6. Those who are guilty of conducting wars of aggression in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, waging a covert war against Syria, planning war against Iran and carrying out targeted assassinations, rendition and torture have no compunction in trampling on fundamental precepts of international law. Vice President Joseph Biden has described Assange as a “high-tech terrorist” and secret US Air Force documents have branded WikiLeaks and Assange as “the enemy”, placing them on a legal par with Al-Qaeda. WikiLeaks’ Internet domains have been shut down and its financial operations blocked by numerous US corporations.

7. As the fate of alleged whistleblower US Private Bradley Manning demonstrates, designation as “the enemy” threatens Assange with indefinite detention without trial and even death under the US Espionage Act of 1917. The supposed crime for which Manning stands accused is the leaking of confidential documents pointing to war crimes on the part of US imperialism. For this he has been imprisoned in a military brig for more than two years and subjected to inhuman and abusive treatment.

8. Feigned moral outrage over Assange’s personal behaviour, centring on unproven allegations, has been used to denounce anyone who defends his democratic rights as a “defender of rape”. The common refrain, led by the liberal media, is that the allegations against Assange must be taken at face value, or the integrity of all victims of sexual abuse is thrown into question. In contrast, Assange’s well-founded

fear of political persecution and concern for his own integrity is dismissed as self-aggrandisement.

9. The absence of any commitment in ruling circles to basic democratic rights is demonstrated by the ability of the US, British and Swedish authorities to rely on so-called liberals and pseudo-lefts to sanction their efforts to railroad Assange. The *Guardian*, having secured the right to selectively publish and edit WikiLeaks cables documenting US war crimes, turned on Assange and led the attempts to blacken his name. For its part, the Labour-controlled National Union of Students Executive has banned Respect MP George Galloway from its platforms and slandered him as a “rape denier” for denouncing the “reign of intellectual terror” whipped up over allegations of sexual misconduct in order to vilify Assange. In a blatant attack on free speech, the NUS extends a blanket ban on anyone defending Assange by stating that it will refuse a “platform to speakers who are rape deniers or apologists, or support events where such individuals speak”.

10. Britain’s pseudo-left groups echo the propaganda of the liberal media that the allegations of sexual assault have nothing to do with the efforts of the US, Britain and Sweden to silence Assange and destroy WikiLeaks. For more than a year, the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party refused to defend Assange. They finally broke their silence only for the SWP to argue that he “must face rape charges” and the SP to state that the accusations against him “should be properly investigated” and “taken seriously”.

11. Just as spurious humanitarian considerations serve as the means for these layers to sanction imperialist war, so too have genuflections towards feminism provided the ideological justification for an assault on essential legal precepts such as the presumption of innocence. Notwithstanding worthless appeals to the Swedish authorities to guarantee that Assange will not be extradited to the US, the pseudo-lefts’ weasel words amount to support for the WikiLeaks founder’s extradition. Both organisations have long been in agreement with the campaign to tar Assange as a sexual criminal, but were initially reluctant to say so publicly. Just as these organisations openly lined up behind imperialist intervention in Libya and now Syria, so too they have come out in support of the efforts to silence the exposure of western war crimes by Assange and WikiLeaks.

12. The campaign against Assange has provided a devastating indictment of identity politics based on gender, race and sexual preference. Long held up as a progressive alternative to the supposedly crude class-based politics of socialism, the essentially right wing character of the fixation on lifestyle politics has been demonstrated by events. It has provided the chief mechanism through which a privileged

and self-satisfied middle class layer has been integrated into the structures of official bourgeois politics.

13. The petty-bourgeois groups are wholly indifferent to the broader ramifications of the persecution of Assange. Never once have they made the essential connection between his threatened extradition and the anti-democratic procedures that now determine the fate of so many others. The European Arrest Warrant is only one example of how extradition can be carried out almost at will, based only on “suspicion” of criminal activity. It is part of a battery of anti-democratic legislation enacted under the guise of the “war on terror” that has established the legal framework of a police state. This includes detention without trial—in the case of Babar Ahmad for up to eight years prior to his extradition to the US—and the shoot-to-kill policy operated by the Metropolitan Police that led to the brutal slaying of Jean Charles de Menezes by plainclothes officers.

14. The fate of Assange stands in stark contrast to the kid gloves treatment of Chilean fascist dictator and mass murderer General Augusto Pinochet, whose extradition to Spain was rejected by the previous Labour government. Held from October 1998, Pinochet spent more than a year in the UK, living in luxury, before being allowed to return to Chile on the grounds of ill health.

15. The political representatives of the financial oligarchy are spurred on by the global breakdown of capitalism to ever more brazen acts of criminality in their defence of the indefensible—a system that plunges billions into abject poverty and brutal oppression so that a few can live lives of unparalleled and even depraved luxury. In the next period, the police state methods used to persecute Assange will be directed more broadly against masses of working people as they enter struggle against austerity and the drive to war.

16. The defence of Assange, Manning and WikiLeaks, and of democratic rights more broadly, cannot be waged through the hollowed out institutions of British parliamentarism or appeals to the powers that be. It demands the independent political mobilisation of the working class on a socialist programme for the abolition of the profit system. Only the formation of a workers’ government, the reorganisation of society on the basis of human need, not private profit, and the establishment of genuine democracy in every aspect of economic, political and social life can safeguard civil liberties and avert the danger of war and reaction.



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