

Two weeks since WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange silenced by Ecuador

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Two weeks have passed since the Ecuadorian government cut off WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange from any communication with the outside world, placing a block on his access to the Internet, phone communications and visitors.

Assange has been confined to Ecuador's embassy in London for the last six years, where he had been granted political asylum as he has fought to avoid being extradited to Sweden for questioning on trumped-up sexual assault allegations. The United States has long sought to detain and prosecute Assange for publishing emails and diplomatic logs exposing American war crimes in the Middle East and the corruption of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Any accusations against Assange have long been dropped by Sweden, and the UN has declared his confinement to the embassy to be illegal. However, the British government continues to insist that they will arrest him if he leaves the building for any reason, including health problems, and presumably deliver him immediately into the clutches of the American government.

CIA director Mike Pompeo, soon to be President Trump's Secretary of State, has declared WikiLeaks to be a "hostile non-state actor." Then businessman Trump called for the death penalty for Assange and others involved with WikiLeaks in 2010.

According the government of Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno, Assange has been cut off from Internet access for "interfering" in the politics of another country by tweeting about the arrest of the former Catalonia leader Carles Puigdemont in Germany.

In days leading up to his silencing, Assange released statements questioning the official narrative spun by the UK government around the alleged poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal by Russia. He had also tweeted links to the WSWs series exposing the unprecedented number of former CIA agents running as Democrats in the US

midterm elections.

It is no coincidence that Assange has been shut off from any form of communication with the outside world as the US and its allies prepare for an escalation of the war in Syria and for direct confrontations with nuclear-armed Russia. The censorship of oppositional voices that are critical of the official narrative is seen as necessary to selling new wars to the public.

The outrageous assault on Assange has been met with an approving silence by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and the other major bourgeois publications, which have had no further reports, comments or editorials since their initial news reports on March 28.

The pro-war "human rights" imperialists employed as columnists by these papers would be banging the drums of war if a dissident journalist or publisher had been cut off from the Internet by Russian President Vladimir Putin. There wouldn't be enough barrels of ink to fill the columns demanding a war to defend "journalistic freedom."

Moreover, there has, predictably, been no defense of Assange's democratic rights from the pseudo-left, including the International Socialist Organization, which publishes *Socialist Worker*; *Jacobin*, which has close ties to the Democratic Socialist of America; and Socialist Alternative. On the reactionary basis of identity politics, these adjuncts of the Democratic Party and American imperialism threw Assange to the wolves as soon as sexual assault accusations surfaced.

Also noticeable is the lack of any protests from organizations that have previously opposed the persecution of Assange and attacks on WikiLeaks. As of this writing, there have been no official statements posted on the websites of Amnesty International, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Freedom of the Press Foundation or the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Documentary filmmaker and journalist John Pilger and

Assange's mother, Christine Assange, spoke about the political motivations behind his silencing in an interview on the Flashpoints program broadcast on Pacifica Radio stations on Thursday.

"There is a particular cruelty being imposed on Julian Assange because he is the embodiment of dissent which is missing across the political spectrum in Western countries," Pilger explained. "He has become the enemy to governments in the West.

"Taking away his right to communicate is an attack on freedom of speech. It is an attack on our rights as well as his. I have never met anyone as defiantly courageous as Julian. Not at all courageous are the so-called opposition, who are silent."

Christine Assange drew the connection between Assange's silencing and his criticism of the British government's anti-Russia campaign whipped up around the Skripal affair, which has quickly been exposed as a pack of lies.

"John Pilger mentioned that we are at a rather critical stage with Russia, because of the apparent propaganda around this poisoning in the UK. It has been found not to be conclusively related to Russia.

"I would say that we are also at a critical stage regarding Julian's safety and freedom. The two situations are related. For example, the day before Julian's communications with the outside world were cut off, one of the members in the UK parliament asked, 'Isn't it about time we took some action against the Ecuadorian embassy?' He wasn't happy about Julian tweeting about the government response to the attack in Salisbury."

"I like the Orwell quote, that if there is any hope, it lies in the proles," Christine Assange noted later in the interview. "Throughout history, it generally has not been the leaders who have ensured our rights. It has been the people who have stood up and demanded that their leaders act in their interests. We are at a pivotal point in history where, as John [Pilger] said, we are facing a possible global war and at the same time a war on journalism."



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