Ecuadorian foreign minister asserts treatment of Assange is “not censorship”

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Speaking from New York yesterday, Ecuador’s foreign minister María Fernanda Espinosa defended her government’s vindictive decision to cut WikiLeaks’ editor Julian Assange off from all communication and even personal visitors. For 10 weeks, Assange has been deprived of contact with the outside world, under conditions in which his health has been seriously compromised by being confined inside the small Ecuadorian embassy in London for nearly six years.

Espinosa again hinted that Ecuador is working to force Assange out of the embassy into the clutches of waiting police and a prison cell, and the prospect of extradition to the United States on charges of espionage. She stated she was in discussion with both British authorities and Assange’s lawyers. “I think all parties are interested in finding an outlet, a solution, to this complex situation,” she declared.

Ecuadorian president, Lenín Moreno, last year slandered Assange as a “hacker” and described the granting of political asylum to him by the previous president as an “inherited problem.” Under Moreno, Ecuador has sought to mend its relations with US imperialism. Democratic rights, WikiLeaks and Julian Assange are part of the price. Assange’s communications were cut off just one day after a top-level US military delegation held talks with Moreno’s government on strengthening “security cooperation.”

Espinosa justified her government’s action by condemning Assange for doing what journalists should do: comment on and raise awareness about political issues.

She told the Associated Press: “On several occasions he [Assange] has agreed on not intervening in internal politics of third-party countries and unfortunately he has not complied with his commitment, so for the time being he is not allowed to have access to the internet.”

In her most remarkable statement, she asserted that depriving one of the best known investigative journalists and exposers of government criminality of their ability to communicate was “not a matter of censorship.”

Assange is not only being censored by the Ecuadorian government, but far worse. It is working as part of a calculated attempt to break Julian Assange and pressure him into “voluntarily” leaving the embassy into the hands of his persecutors.

Espinosa was in New York as part of Ecuador’s campaign for her to be named as the next president of the United Nations General Assembly. Pushing out Assange may well get her the vote of the US, British, Australian, and other governments that are part of the international conspiracy against WikiLeaks.

The statements of Ecuador’s foreign minister follow those last week by its President Moreno. In words that could have been spoken by any police-state dictator, he asserted that there was “responsible liberty” and “liberty in which everyone thinks they can do whatever they want, whenever they want and however they want.”

In the Orwellian world that a global campaign of internet and state censorship is seeking to create, the mass of the population will be cut off from all information and political commentary that exposes and challenges the unprecedented levels of social inequality, oppression and war.

The internet conglomerates such as Google and Facebook, along with the establishment media, are the enforcers of “responsible liberty,” “responsible journalism” and “responsible politics”—that is, the silencing of any opposition to the capitalist system which has enabled just eight individuals to amass more wealth than half the world’s population and threatens

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to plunge humanity into a nuclear third world war.

Those who insist on the right of the working class to know the truth and to fight for social change are denounced as anarchic forces of instability who threaten the very fabric of society.

Assange and WikiLeaks are under attack because of the actions they have taken, especially in 2010, to publish leaks provided by whistleblowers that have lifted the lid on US war crimes, anti-democratic intrigues, government corruption and corporate abuses.

As the WSWS perspective commented yesterday: "The American state and its allies are seeking to destroy WikiLeaks and Julian Assange in order to intimidate every critical and independent media organisation. The aim is to suppress the exposure of the crimes and lies of governments and to silence all those who seek to defend democratic rights and freedom of speech."

At this moment of extreme danger for Assange, momentum is building behind a renewed struggle to demand his immediate and unconditional freedom.

A vigil called in London on June 19—the anniversary of when the WikiLeaks' editor sought asylum six years ago—has spread around the world, with events now organised in various American cities, in Europe and in Australia.

The demonstration called in Sydney, Australia on Sunday, June 17 by the Socialist Equality Party, with the support and participation of journalist John Pilger, is gaining endorsement from principled defenders of democratic rights. The demonstration will demand that the Australian government end its complicity in the persecution of Assange—an Australian citizen—and take immediate steps to secure his release and return to Australia, with guaranteed protection against any US extradition warrants.

Workers, youth and students around the world should fight to build support and take part in the demonstrations and vigils, or call them in cities where one is not currently organised.

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