

# Sheila Coombes, Professor Tim Hayward and journalist Vanessa Beeley demand freedom for Julian Assange

Our reporters  
11 June 2018

Media on Trial is a group of concerned individuals, including anti-war campaigners, academics and investigative journalists, who have opposed media propaganda and censorship in the numerous “regime change” operations led by the United States and Britain.

The organisation’s fight to reveal the truth has made it the target of a smear campaign that culminated in unsuccessful efforts by Labour-led Leeds City Council to ban its most recent event.

Three prominent individuals associated with the group have sent statements to the *World Socialist Web Site* supporting the campaign to free Julian Assange, whose courageous efforts to expose imperialist war crimes and other criminal activities has led to his effective imprisonment for almost six years in the Ecuadorian Embassy, London.

Sheila Coombes is the founder of Frome Stop War, an independent anti-war group. She writes:

“Julian Assange is incarcerated in the Ecuadorian Embassy, not because he poses a threat to society, but because he represents a threat to those whose intent is to foment war and effect deadly regime changes unchecked.

“It is unthinkable that in the 21st Century some see fit to punish a whistle-blower with such humanitarian credentials, given his exposure of war crimes in Iraq and beyond. It is unthinkable that in the 21st Century, when we’ve noted the value of 20th Century whistle-blowers like Daniel Ellsberg who exposed crimes of the Vietnam war, that Assange is vilified. It is also unthinkable that in the 21st Century, with wide and varied discussions of human rights, that Assange’s human rights and freedom are denied.

“As founder of an independent anti-war group, I am among those who’ve been informed by Julian’s work. All of those who rail against war, military intervention and deadly regime change owe a debt of gratitude to Julian. All of those who subscribe to the tenet of freedom of speech should thank Julian, and all of those who agree that human rights should be respected, should call for his release.”

Tim Hayward is Professor of Environmental Political Theory at the University of Edinburgh and a founding member of the Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media (SPM), set up to “facilitate research and debate with respect to the 2011-present war in Syria and the role of both media and propaganda.” Hayward was the target of a smear campaign, most recently by the *Times* newspaper. He writes:

“A United Nations panel has affirmed and reaffirmed that Julian Assange is being arbitrarily detained. This detention without trial, or even charge, goes against natural justice, international legal obligations, and simple human morality. It is also a grave indication of the precarious status of civil rights and political freedom in the UK. If we, the body politic, fail to secure elementary justice in a case as clear and conspicuous as that of Julian Assange, then the outlook for political freedom in this country will be worse than bleak.”

Vanessa Beeley is an investigative journalist and photographer who had reported from inside Syria (including East Aleppo), Egypt and Palestine. She played an important role in exposing Syria’s White Helmets as an arm of western propaganda and regime-change operations. For this, she has been subjected to an unrelenting smear campaign by the official media.

Beeley writes:

“Martin Luther King taught us that ‘Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.’

“Those who are truly fighting injustice in this world by exposing its gnarled and tangled roots are a rare commodity and as such, must be protected at all costs to prevent the loss of our ability to shatter the prism of ignorance our governments would like to see us contained within.

“Julian Assange is on trial for truth bearing. His work has been instrumental in shedding light upon some of the most heinous crimes committed by those who would rule over us. Assange has given us the tools with which we are able to escape the Establishment induced abuser/victim paradigm that we have endured for decades.

“If we do not stand by Assange in his darkest hours we abandon our claim to integrity and morality in one fell swoop. We are all Julian Assange and only by uniting behind each threatened truth seeker can we expect to ensure our future is based upon honesty and not deceit of terrifying proportions.

“The brave should be defended with courage so the next generation may be built upon honour, ethics and principles that do not bow to pressure from the weak.”

**Freedom for Julian Assange! Attend the vigil at the Ecuador Embassy in London**

Tuesday June 19, 6-8 p.m.

3 Hans Crescent

London, SW1X0LN

(nearest Tube station: Knightsbridge, Piccadilly Line)

For further details on the vigil visit:

<https://wiseupaction.info/2018/>



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**