

Join the June 17 demonstration in Sydney and June 19 rallies to defend WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
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The *World Socialist Web Site* urges its readers internationally to join the demonstrations and vigils being held over the coming days to defend WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange and demand his immediate release from involuntary confinement in Ecuador's London embassy.

The near eight-year persecution of WikiLeaks and Assange by the combined forces of the American state apparatus and its allies is one of the sharpest expressions of a global onslaught on freedom of speech, an independent and critical media, and all the democratic and social rights of the working class.

Julian Assange has not committed any crime. Rather, WikiLeaks has published whistleblower leaks that have exposed the war crimes, mass surveillance and rampant criminality of the US government and its allies, together with their militaries, establishment political parties and corporate oligarchies.

By doing so, WikiLeaks has further exposed the thoroughly corrupted character of the official media, which collaborates with the state, censors any information it receives, or publishes outright propaganda, in order to ensure that the world's people are not made aware of the actual state of affairs in the corridors of power.

WikiLeaks has made an immense contribution to revealing the truth. That is what lies behind the determination of the US and allied governments to shut down the organisation and personally destroy Assange.

The situation facing Assange is extremely serious. June 19 will mark the end of the sixth year in which he has been confined inside the Ecuadorian embassy, where he was granted political asylum in 2012 to protect him from extradition to Sweden and the risk of

extradition to the United States to face manufactured charges of espionage—which could lead to decades of imprisonment or even the death penalty.

The British government has refused to allow Assange to leave the small embassy building to receive medical and dental treatment, or even to exercise outdoors. He has been deprived of natural sunlight for six years. His health has been severely compromised.

Since March 28, his persecution has been escalated. In violation of the obligation that it accepted to protect Assange when it granted him political asylum, the Ecuadorian government of President Lenín Moreno has deprived him of any means to communicate with the outside world, including with his family in Australia, and denied him access to any visitors apart from his legal representation.

A conscious attempt is being made to break Assange physically and psychologically and force him to leave the embassy, into the clutches of the waiting British police. The WikiLeaks editor would be imprisoned while his legal representatives fought a protracted fight in the British courts against the Trump administration's likely extradition request.

Around the world there is tremendous respect and support for the courageous work undertaken by Assange and WikiLeaks. The campaign undertaken by the *World Socialist Web Site* has won endorsements by prominent principled defenders of democratic rights and, importantly, revealed the depth of sentiment for Assange's defence among workers and young people internationally.

This response has been won despite the mass media enforcing almost blanket censorship on both his condition and the efforts being made to defend him. An

entire layer of ex-liberal and ex-left organisations and individuals internationally have abandoned their previous vows of support for WikiLeaks and Assange as they have lined up behind the imperialist agenda of their own ruling classes.

To the extent that the fake, pseudo-left milieu refers to Assange, it is to resort to slander in order to oppose any support for him. The most absurd lie is that Assange is a supporter of Donald Trump, the very president whose administration has declared Assange's arrest a "priority" and labelled WikiLeaks a "hostile non-state intelligence agency."

Our campaign has explained that the persecution of Assange and WikiLeaks is an attack on the rights of all working people. It is part of a burgeoning campaign of state repression and censorship aimed at silencing opposition to social inequality, injustice, corporate exploitation and the militarist policies of the US and other imperialist states.

The rallies and vigils organised in support of Assange will be important contributions to the development of an ongoing campaign—in direct opposition to the entire political, media, trade union and pseudo-left establishment—to mobilise the strength of the international working class to not only win his freedom, but to launch a counter-offensive against the ruling class.

Tomorrow, Sunday June 17, the first of these events will take place in Sydney, Australia, beginning at 1:00 p.m. in the city's Town Hall Square. The demonstration has been called by the Socialist Equality Party, the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The central demand of the Sydney demonstration is that the Australian government exercise its diplomatic power and legal obligation to protect Assange, an Australian citizen, from the threats made against him by the Trump administration.

If he chooses to do so, Assange must be able to return to Australia with an explicit guarantee that any request by American authorities for his extradition to the United States will be rejected.

In November 2010, the Labor Party government of Prime Minister Julia Gillard refused to honour its obligation to defend Assange. Instead, it fully backed the persecution of WikiLeaks and declared it would work with Washington to prosecute and imprison its

editor.

The current government in Canberra—the Liberal-National Coalition headed by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull—will only intervene under the most intense political pressure.

The Sydney rally will be addressed by SEP national secretary James Cogan; representatives of teacher and student organisations; and well-known journalist and film-maker John Pilger. The event will be live-streamed to a world audience via the SEP Australia's Facebook page.

On Tuesday, June 19—the sixth anniversary of when Assange entered the Ecuadorian embassy—vigils are being held in his defence in London and other cities around the world.

In London, the demand will be raised that the Conservative government of Prime Minister Theresa May end its cruel persecution of Assange, drop the bail-related issues against him and allow him to leave the Ecuadorian embassy and, if he chooses, leave the United Kingdom without fear of arrest.

In Melbourne, Australia, James Cogan will address the June 19 vigil, along with well-known advocates for WikiLeaks and Assange. In New Zealand, a representative of the Socialist Equality Group, which stands in solidarity with the ICFI, will address a vigil and demonstration in the country's capital, Wellington.

We call on workers and youth all over the world to promote, publicise and take part in the international initiatives in defence of Julian Assange.



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