

Sri Lankan artists speak out in defence of Julian Assange

16 June 2018

Veteran Sri Lankan television and film actor Lakshman Mendis, who has appeared in more than 100 stage plays, television dramas and films, extends his support to Julian Assange. Noteworthy television productions featuring Mendis include Kadulla, Nadunana Putthu and Dande Lu Gini, which deal with the history of the Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP) and the evolution of the working-class movement in Sri Lanka. His most recent film role is in Swaroopu, an adaptation of Franz Kafka's novella Metamorphosis. He is currently preparing for a Sinhala adaptation of Rashomon by Akira Kurasowa.

I fully support the international campaign launched by the ICFI for the freedom of Julian Assange.

He has done a great service to mankind by exposing the conspiracies of the imperialist powers driven on a warpath. In particular, he has made us aware of the rapidly growing threat of nuclear war.

His life is currently in great danger. We have learnt from the WSWs that Assange's communication with the outside world has been shut down and he is under 24/7 surveillance inside the Ecuadorean embassy. This is a gross violation of his basic rights. Ecuadorean authorities have knelt down before US pressure. Australia, being an ally of the US, has not defended Assange.

In Sri Lanka, we are facing censorship and attacks on freedom of speech. Even though the government was forced to pass a parliamentary act on the right to information, it refuses to reveal the names of financial fraudsters. The government continues to violate the rule of law.

Despite these vicious attacks launched by governments, many others will come forward to expose these conspiracies in the future. The step taken by Assange is only the beginning.

We live in a world where millions are undergoing

devastation due to wars escalated by the imperialist powers. It is a fundamental duty of all our artists to join this initiative taken by the WSWs. We must be able to defeat these attacks.

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Prominent abstract painter Bartholameuse Wimalaratne issued the following statement supporting Julian Assange. Wimalaratne has held six well-received solo exhibitions, with the latest entitled, INSIGHT, at Colombo's Lionel Wendt Art Centre in January. One of the main themes of his artistic work is human alienation under capitalism.

What I learnt from the detailed reports and analysis published on the WSWs about the treatment of Assange is shocking. He is treated like a criminal because he exposed grotesque war crimes carried out by the imperialist powers led by the United States.

As an artist, I always cherish freedom of expression and the right to know the truth. WikiLeaks and Assange did the right thing.

I have no doubt that Assange knew the terrible consequences of his rightful act under the brutal, reactionary capitalist system. Yet it did not stop him doing his job of exposing the truth about the system's crimes. Due to his courageous act, millions of people all over the world have become aware of the real meaning and nature of the so-called "war on terror." At the same time, through the exposure of secret diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks, we all came to know how various nation states, including Sri Lanka, maintain close collaboration with the US for their common interests.

No one who values democratic rights can look the other way and allow this courageous journalist to be thrown to the imperialist wolves. This is why I wholeheartedly support the defence campaign waged by the International Committee of the Fourth

International (ICFI) and its sections in different parts of the world on behalf of Assange.

I fully back the demonstrations on this issue, already announced, to be held in Sydney, Australia on June 17, in London on June 19 and also the picket to be held on June 19 in front of the Fort Railway Station in central Colombo, Sri Lanka, at 4.00 p.m.

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***Ratnasiri Paranawithana**, a prolific freelance script writer, drama director and lyricist, sent the following statement. Paranawithana has produced a number of significant arts works, including many Sinhala-language television dramas, films and stage plays. Notable among his works is Ankura, a stage adaptation of Animal Farm, George Orwell's allegorical novella.*

Free Julian Assange unconditionally!

For nearly three decades, US imperialism has been continuously engaged in military offensives against humanity, in one or another part of the world, to restore its hegemony over the planet through war.

It is estimated that more than 20 million people lost their lives in the wars waged by American imperialism since the end of WWII, in other words, equal to the number killed during the whole period of WWI.

While those who have occupied the seats of power in Washington have such blood-soaked hands, their hypocrisy knows no bounds when they paint Assange as a criminal. What Assange has done in exposing the crimes of imperialism has been a powerful contribution that helps strengthen the revolutionary forces in the struggle to stop a third world war.

On this occasion, we must take it as our duty to humanity to join the fight against the US, UK, Australian and other ruling class gangs that are attempting to destroy Assange and the WikiLeaks publication. I pay tribute to the WSWs for waging this international campaign to free Assange.

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***Bertie B. Kudahetti**, a prolific poet, novelist and drama producer has extended his support to the free Julian Assange campaign.*

According to Lenin's characterisation, imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. Today world capitalism faces its deepest unsolvable crisis. This has brought the world to the brink of a catastrophic nuclear war.

The imperialists cannot tolerate their war preparations, war plans, crimes and conspiracies being

revealed. They therefore make every effort to stop this. The criminal efforts to silence Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, are part of this. I strongly condemn that.

He has been trapped in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London under false accusations, preventing all connection with the outside world. The fight to free him is part of the fight to defend freedom of speech, freedom of Internet use and all other democratic rights.

I express my fullest support to the international campaign launched by the ICFI, the SEP and the WSWs to free Julian Assange.



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