

Defend Julian Assange!—Mobilise against threat to WikiLeaks founder!

Paul Mitchell
24 July 2018

An emergency vigil took place outside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London yesterday following credible reports that Ecuador's government, under intense pressure from the United States and UK, is about to renege on the political asylum the former administration granted to WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange in 2012.

Ecuador's President Lenin Moreno is in London this week to address the 2018 Global Disability Summit. Although he has denied that any discussions on Assange will take place, behind the scenes he is involved in a conspiracy with the British, US and Australian governments to evict the WikiLeaks founder.

The threat is that his eviction would see Assange immediately arrested and jailed, pending extradition to the US and a secret Grand Jury indictment, where he could face the death penalty on espionage and conspiracy charges.

Assange has already spent more than six years incarcerated in Ecuador's embassy. In the last four months, all communication with the outside world, except his lawyers, has been cut off.

Assange has not been charged with a single crime. He is being persecuted because WikiLeaks has exposed the mass surveillance, anti-democratic machinations and war crimes being conducted by governments and corporations, particularly the US and its allies.

Emmy, who has been a key figure in the campaign outside the Ecuadorian embassy over the last six years and helped organise yesterday's vigil said, "We have been very concerned about reports that Julian Assange's eviction from the Ecuadorian embassy is imminent. We are very concerned that the current Ecuadorian government is in negotiations with the UK and the US for removing the protection of political

asylum that has been given to Julian Assange over the last years and handing him over to the British authorities.

"We are aware that there is a Grand Jury investigation in the US and it has been building up a national security case and preparing espionage charges against him. A sealed indictment already exists and is in the hands of the British police."

Emmy explained that Moreno is using his visit to the UK for a disability conference as a cover for talks with Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservative government to hand Assange over to the British, and ultimately, US authorities.

"We are here to say 'No.' Julian must be protected and he must be set free. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention made a ruling that he is being arbitrarily detained and should be freed and compensated. This is right and should be respected.

"However, the prognosis is not positive. [UK Foreign Secretary] Jeremy Hunt has been reported as saying there are 'serious charges' against Assange even though there are no serious charges against him. Then there are the reports that the UK government has authorised the use of lethal force in the streets of London to apprehend him.

"What is going on is very high level behind the scenes that we don't often have an insight into."

Emmy said she had sent a letter to the Labour Party London Mayor Sadiq Khan and London Assembly members about "the police operation keeping Julian Assange trapped in the Ecuadorian Embassy despite UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention legal opinion that he should be released and compensated."

She disputed Khan's recent claim that the Metropolitan Police Service had withdrawn "the physical presence of officers [known as Operation

Kudo] from outside the Embassy on 12 October 2015” and that the estimated cost of policing the Ecuadorian Embassy between June 2012 and October 2015 was £13.2 million.

“This is simply not true and much needed transparency is needed on the matter of police spending in keeping Julian Assange trapped inside the Embassy. Video footage shared by WikiLeaks of police surveillance, eye witness accounts and statements by the police that covert surveillance continues makes the mayor’s statements simply false. The physical presence of officers is very much felt and witnessed.”

In the letter to Khan, Emmy wrote, “This week I read reports on the Internet that the UK government has authorised the Metropolitan Police to use lethal force to apprehend Julian Assange amidst reports in the UK and international press that his expulsion from the Ecuadorian Embassy is imminent.

“UK Minister Penny Mordaunt is meeting Ecuadorian [president] Lenin Moreno in London on Tuesday, 24th of July during the International Disability Summit at the Queen Elizabeth Park, whilst British foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt has told the press that ‘serious charges laid against him’ and ‘we want him to face justice’.

“This UK government is backed up in parliament by the DUP [Democratic Unionist Party], a political party with long history of political violence in Northern Ireland. Reports that lethal force is OK to use in the streets of London in the apprehension of a publisher who has never been charged with any crime, but has been a beacon in the transparency in public life, are chilling to the bone.

“Will the London mayor finally reveal how much money has been spent and is being spent keeping the publisher of WikiLeaks Julian Assange inside the embassy under threat of arrest by all means possible including using lethal force by the British Police? Will he confirm that the use of lethal force against Julian Assange is not the legacy he wishes to aspire to.”

Khan has never defended Assange and has yet to respond to an earlier letter, delivered to him on April 11, asking he intervene.

Similarly, since he was elected leader in September 2015, Labour’s Jeremy Corbyn has made no public statement in Assange’s defence and has made no comment on the threat of imminent moves against him.

His silence, and that of the trade unions and their pseudo-left apologists, has played the central role in helping the efforts to isolate and silence the WikiLeaks editor, and has facilitated the campaign of internet censorship by the ruling elite, with serious implications for democratic rights.

These latest developments underscore the necessity to deepen the fight for a powerful international working-class movement for Assange’s freedom and for the defence of all basic democratic rights.

The urgent protests being organised in many countries to respond to Assange’s eviction from Ecuador’s London embassy must be seen as the beginning of a protracted campaign to defend him and oppose the increasing attack and censorship on critical voices and independent media on the Internet.

Assange’s fate cannot be left up to capitalist governments and courts. The vast social power of the international working class must be mobilised for his defence, independent of all the pro-imperialist parties, trade unions and media organisations that have lined up with the ruling class against him.

The WSWS urges readers to support a protest being held in support of Assange at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park on Tuesday July 24, where Lenin Moreno is addressing the Global Disability Summit. The protest begins from 7:30 a.m. at the Here East building in The Yard. The nearest rail station is Hackney Wick.

Full address: Here East
Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park
London, E15 2GW
Tuesday, July 24, 7:30 a.m.



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