

Rally to demand the Australian government acts to free Julian Assange!

Sydney Martin Place Amphitheatre, 2pm, March 3! Melbourne State Library, 1pm, March 10!

**The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
25 January 2019**

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP), the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), calls on workers, students and all those who defend the democratic right to freedom of speech and freedom of the press, to endorse, promote and participate in our demonstrations in Sydney on March 3, and in Melbourne on March 10. These rallies will demand that the Australian government takes immediate action to secure the freedom of WikiLeaks founder and Australian citizen Julian Assange.

In the heart of London, the courageous, Australian-born journalist, publisher and whistleblower, is being subjected to an ongoing violation of his human rights. A conspiracy, orchestrated in Washington, has been underway for over eight years to railroad Assange into a prison cell, or worse.

Assange is being persecuted for his leading role in WikiLeaks' exposures of US-led war crimes, diplomatic intrigues, mass spying and corporate and government corruption, on a vast scale. The aim of the vendetta against him has always been to intimidate and silence independent and critical journalists and would-be whistleblowers.

Since June 19, 2012, Assange has been involuntarily confined inside Ecuador's small London embassy, where he was forced to seek political asylum. He has been denied freedom of movement, direct sunlight and adequate medical treatment, because of the British threat to arrest him if he sets foot outside the building.

For close to a year, Assange has endured conditions more onerous than those imposed on maximum security prisoners. Under pressure from Washington, the Ecuadorian government has turned against him, cutting off most of his communications and his internet access, and severely limiting his right to receive visitors. At the same time, it has demanded that he make no political statements.

Assange is in the process of being forced out of the embassy, without any guarantee that the British authorities will not immediately detain him and collaborate with his extradition to the US to face a show trial on charges of "espionage" or "conspiracy."

Central responsibility for this situation lies with successive Australian Labor and Liberal-National Coalition governments. They have all refused to provide Assange with the assistance and

defence they are obligated to extend to any Australian citizen, despite the fact that the allegations that have repeatedly been made to justify his persecution are a combination of transparent slanders and lies.

The SEP demonstrations are being organised to answer these lies against Assange and to demand that the Australian government honour its undeniable responsibilities to its citizen.

Contrary to continuous—and false—media reports, Assange has never been charged with a crime, let alone "sexual assault" or "rape." In 2010, Swedish prosecutors fabricated a malicious case that he was under "suspicion" for alleged offences, and sought his extradition to answer "questions." The motive behind these slanderous claims was to silence Assange—just as WikiLeaks was publishing explosive information about US war crimes—and facilitate his temporary detention in Sweden while his rendition to the US was organised.

Assange entered the Ecuadorian embassy in London only after he had lost a protracted legal battle against prejudicial rulings by British courts that he be extradited to Sweden. He sought assistance from Ecuador because he was given no diplomatic, political or even legal support by the Australian Labor Party government, then headed by Julia Gillard.

In May 2017, long after Assange and his legal team had answered every "question" asked of him, Swedish prosecutors finally admitted they had no case and abandoned both their bogus investigation and extradition warrant.

Nevertheless, the British authorities, with the backing of the Morrison Liberal-National Coalition government in Australia, are still threatening to arrest Assange if he leaves the embassy. Yet, the only charge against the WikiLeaks' publisher is that he breached bail when he took essential action to protect himself from persecution and injustice by seeking asylum.

With the "rape" claims discredited, the anti-democratic response of the political and media establishment has escalated. New attacks against Assange and WikiLeaks have been manufactured, alleging they were part of a conspiracy, in collusion with the Russian government and intelligence agencies, to assist Donald Trump win the 2016 US presidential election.

The truth is that whistleblowers provided WikiLeaks with troves

of emails, whose authenticity has never been questioned, revealing that the Democratic National Committee (DNC) sought to rig the party's primaries on behalf of war-monger and big-business favourite Hillary Clinton. The DNC was openly seeking to undermine the widespread support, especially among young people, for the self-styled "democratic socialist," Bernie Sanders.

In July 2016, WikiLeaks published these emails, in the public interest of American voters and Democratic Party supporters. In October 2016, WikiLeaks also published emails, containing secret speeches delivered by Clinton to corporate audiences, in which she pledged to support their interests and boasted of her role in organising US wars, such as the 2011 attack on Libya.

The Democratic Party, with Sanders' endorsement, responded by nominating Clinton as its candidate regardless. She did not lose to Trump because of Assange and WikiLeaks. She lost because her right-wing record and policies were rejected by millions of American workers and youth—who refused to vote for either Trump or Clinton—combined with the impact of the anti-democratic peculiarities of the US Electoral College system, which chooses the president.

Since the 2016 US election, the manufactured hysteria over "Russian meddling" has primarily been aimed at justifying a massive campaign of media censorship on the internet, with Google and Facebook now openly blocking popular access to left-wing, progressive, anti-capitalist and anti-war websites and social media postings.

Trump's administration has never given any support to WikiLeaks or to Assange. It signalled, from the outset, that the US vendetta against them would not stop with the election of the billionaire oligarch. In April 2017, CIA director Mike Pompeo—now Trump's secretary of state—declared that WikiLeaks would be treated as a "non-state hostile intelligence service" because it published leaks exposing CIA hacking operations.

In November 2018, a US Department of Justice (DoJ) document surfaced, indicating that the DoJ had a sealed indictment of espionage or conspiracy against Assange, most likely dating back to 2010.

The hostility of the entire Australian political establishment towards Assange stems from its unconditional commitment to the US-Australia military alliance, including the extraordinary integration of the Australian armed forces and intelligence agencies into the US preparations for war with China.

Since 2013, the Liberal-National Party Coalition has seamlessly continued the former Labor government's agenda. Last year, then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull refused to even acknowledge the appeals to his government, made by high-profile Australian supporters of Assange, that it defend his human rights and secure his freedom. This included the demands made at the June 17, 2018 rally, organised by the SEP at Sydney's Town Hall Square, and addressed by the well-known and highly respected journalist and filmmaker, John Pilger.

As for current Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who was installed following the political coup against Turnbull last August, he has shown only contempt for the democratic rights of Assange. Morrison brushed off the call by WikiLeaks' supporter Pamela Anderson that he act to bring him back to Australia with a crude

sexual innuendo, aimed at belittling the high-profile former actress.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Australian government has the undeniable duty and power to intervene to secure the freedom of Julian Assange. The record has demonstrated, however, that it will only take such action if it is compelled to do so by the greatest pressure from below.

Among masses of ordinary people, Assange is rightly viewed as a heroic figure. These sentiments must be transformed into a broad, political movement of the working class and among youth.

In workplaces around the country, the SEP calls for meetings to be organised, and resolutions moved, demanding that the government immediately exercise its full diplomatic powers and legal discretion to secure Assange's right to leave the London embassy. Assange must be given guaranteed, public assurances by the British and Australian governments that he will be protected from extradition to the US, and able to exercise his unconditional right to return to Australia, if he chooses to do so.

This will only take place in defiance of inevitable opposition from the thoroughly corporatised trade unions, which function as an industrial police force for the government and big business.

The youth movement of the SEP, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), will campaign at universities and high schools to mobilise the largest participation by students in the rallies.

We appeal to all defenders of democratic rights, in Australia and around the world: Publicise the plight of Assange in every way you can; fight internet censorship; and take a stand for freedom of speech and a free media. Rally in March for Julian Assange's freedom!

Sydney

Sunday March 3, 2:00 p.m.

Martin Place Amphitheatre

(between Pitt Street and Castlereagh Street, at the Pitt Street end)

Melbourne

Sunday, March 10, 1:00 p.m.

Victorian State Library steps

Swanston Street, Melbourne

Brisbane (livestream of Sydney rally)

Sunday March 3, 1:00 p.m. (Queensland time)

Woolloongabba Senior Citizens Centre

22 Qualtrough St

Woolloongabba

(Between Ipswich Rd and Logan Rd)



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact