

Attend March 10 Solidarity Vigil in London for Julian Assange

Robert Stevens
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The Socialist Equality Party (UK) calls for maximum participation in the “Solidarity Vigil for Julian Assange” outside the Ecuadorian embassy in London on Sunday, March 10.

The Julian Assange Defence Committee has organised the vigil to complement the rally the same day in Melbourne, Australia, called by the Socialist Equality Party (Australia). A week earlier, Sunday, March 3, the SEP is holding a rally in Sydney to demand Assange’s freedom. Both rallies will be addressed by SEP National Secretary James Cogan.

John Pilger, journalist, filmmaker and outspoken opponent of militarism and injustice, will speak at the Sydney rally, along with well-known academic and human rights advocate Professor Stuart Rees.

The Julian Assange Defence Committee has maintained a regular vigil outside the embassy since 2012, when Assange was forced to take refuge after the British judicial system trampled over his democratic rights in a series of perverse and arbitrary rulings.

Last August, supporters of Assange held a protest outside the embassy to mark six years to the day since Assange was forced into captivity.

Emmy Butlin, one of the organisers of the March 10 event, told the WSWs on Sunday:

“This last month we had two anniversaries that bring home the dire situation Julian Assange faces. On February 5, it was three years since the United Nations Working Group of arbitrary detention published their ruling in his favour demanding he is released and compensated. Despite this clear direction the UK has refused to fulfil its international obligations and as a result on February 23 Julian Assange completed 3,000 days of arbitrary detention.

“With a sealed indictment against him in the US that was accidentally revealed late last year and political developments in Ecuador moving to remove the political

protections of asylum and nationality granted to him by this nation, Julian Assange’s freedom and safety have never been at more risk. He endures a draconian protocol imposed inside the Ecuadorian Embassy, including a year’s-long gagging preventing him from publicly speaking not only about his work and opinions, but also about his life and well-being.

“In these difficult times, we link up with our brothers and sisters in Australia who will rally in Melbourne on March 10, organised by the Socialist Equality Party, to demand that the Australia government take immediate action to secure the freedom of WikiLeaks founder and Australian citizen Julian Assange. We cannot stand by and witness his ordeal unmoved. We are grateful for the rallies in his homeland and inspired by them, and we shall pick up the baton as they finish their action and we shall start a solidarity vigil outside the Ecuadorian Embassy on Sunday, March 10, between 3 and 5 p.m.

“We need international solidarity to bring about a positive outcome in this struggle for freedom for Julian Assange whose work has served humanity, selflessly and courageously at great personal cost. We welcome everyone who believes in justice and in human rights, organisations and individuals to stand with us in respectful vigil in support of the publisher of WikiLeaks.”

“We are very grateful to the WSWs for their support in advertising the event.”

The UK courts upheld a warrant for Assange’s extradition to Sweden, where he was wanted for questioning over bogus allegation that he had committed “sexual misconduct.” Assange was never charged with any crime by Sweden or any other country.

He remains captive in a tiny room in the embassy, in conditions akin to solitary confinement because the UK is working in league with the United States and Australia to ensure he is extradited to America, where he faces charges that could lead to a long prison term for the

“crime” of exposing war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq and imperialist intrigues conducted by the US and other powers.

Contrary to international law, the UK refuses to grant Assange safe passage to Ecuador or his home country, Australia, on the flimsy pretext that he breached bail conditions when he sought asylum. It is nearly two years since Sweden dropped its arrest warrant against Assange.

In December, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention once again condemned the British government for its inhumane treatment and “prolonged deprivation of liberty” for Assange. It specifically declared that the bail issue cannot be used to justify continuing his illegal detainment in the UK.

Noting that it had been three years since the working group handed down its legally binding opinion that Assange was being arbitrarily detained and should be immediately released and compensated, it stated, “The Swedish investigations have been closed for over 18 months now, and the only ground remaining for Mr. Assange’s continued deprivation of liberty is a bail violation in the UK, which is, objectively, a minor offense that cannot post facto justify the more than six years confinement that he has been subjected to since he sought asylum in the Embassy of Ecuador. Mr. Assange should be able to exercise his right to freedom of movement in an unhindered manner, in accordance with the human rights conventions the UK has ratified.”

It added, “As the High Commissioner for human rights said several years ago, human rights treaty law is binding law, it is not discretionary law.”

It would have been impossible for the Conservative governments of Prime Minister Theresa May and her predecessor, David Cameron, to continue their persecution of Assange were it not for the perfidious role played by Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, who has refused to lift a finger in his support.

Corbyn was elected Labour leader in September 2015, and then re-elected, with the backing of hundreds of thousands of party members and supporters. His last public statement on Assange was in July 2015, two months prior to his election as leader. Even in that statement, Corbyn refused to state that he supported Assange’s release, instead declaring, “I think it would be much better if the Swedish authorities investigated the case against him, decided whether there was a case for a prosecution or not, and dealt with it that way, while guaranteeing that under no circumstances would he be extradited to the US.”

Since then Sweden was forced to drop its investigation, but Corbyn has studiously avoided doing anything to secure Assange’s freedom. He regularly addresses large meetings of workers and youth and has never once raised the arbitrary detention of a courageous journalist in a small room, with his health deteriorating, just four miles from Corbyn’s London constituency of Islington North.

Likewise, the trade unions have mounted no campaign in his defence among their more than 5.5 million members. Neither has Labour Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan.

They can count on the tacit support of Britain’s main pseudo-left outfits, the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party and Socialist Resistance, who have backed Assange’s persecution by endorsing the pretext for his extradition—that he must face his accusers in Sweden and denouncing anyone who question their lies as a “rape apologist” for “disbelieving victims.”

The SEP insists that freedom for Assange can be won only through a struggle based on a socialist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist perspective. Everything depends on a determined effort to politically mobilise the broadest possible layers of workers and youth internationally on such a perspective.

We call on all defenders of civil liberties and democratic rights, all opponents of imperialist wars for regime change, to attend the March 10 vigil and make it known in your workplaces, campuses and schools and throughout social media.

No US Extradition for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange!

Sunday, March 10, 3-5 p.m.

Outside the Ecuadorian Embassy

Hans Crescent, London SW1X 0LS *Nearest tube station Knightsbridge (Piccadilly Line)*

Further details will be made available at the wiseupaction.info site of the Julian Assange Defence Committee



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact