

More voices from the Sydney Free Assange rally and Brisbane Livestream meeting

Our reporters
6 March 2019

Support is growing on social media for this Sunday's rally in Melbourne, demanding that the Australian government takes immediate action to secure the freedom of Julian Assange, and a vigil on the same day outside London's Ecuadorian embassy, where the WikiLeaks founder and publisher has been detained for almost seven years.

The Melbourne protest has been organised by the Socialist Equality Party, while the London Vigil was called by the Julian Assange Defence Committee, which has waged a protracted campaign for Assange's freedom.

The events follow last Sunday's successful SEP rally in Sydney, which was attended by around 300 people and followed by hundreds more around the world on social media. Speeches from the event, including by world-renowned investigative journalist John Pilger, *Consortium News* editor-in-chief Joe Lauria and SEP national secretary James Cogan have been viewed and read by thousands on various online platforms.

WSWS reporters spoke to a number of those who attended the Sydney protest, and a concurrent SEP meeting in Brisbane, which viewed the Livestream of the rally.

Corinne told WSWS reporters at the Sydney rally that she has been involved in the defence of Julian Assange and WikiLeaks for many years.

Asked about the rally, she commented: "I've been listening to John Pilger, Joe Lauria and Professor Stuart Rees for years. They all spoke very powerfully, as did James Cogan. We need at this time to be straight to the point. We need to be bold and forward.

"We need to demand of the government, 'what are you going to do to assist Julian now?' We should not be beating around the bush because his life is in danger.

"Like it was said in the speeches today, by people

who are brilliantly supporting Julian, it is important that we come together in unity and put real pressure on this Australian government. It's outrageous how they are not recognising that Julian has been arbitrarily detained.

"I think Australian governments just look after themselves. They're committed to a power structure where all the real decisions are taken behind closed doors. They're not interested in the citizenry, including Julian. It's very concerning, the way they are carrying out mass surveillance. It's really an assault on all of us. It has to be denounced loudly."

Asked about the abandonment of Assange by a host of organisations that once claimed to support him, Corinne stated: "I continuously encourage those civil liberties groups and international rights organisations to take a stand for Julian.

"But many of these organisations have not done anything to assist him. Many of them have ties to governments. Others as well I've tried to talk to and confronted but they have not been responding. There are individuals within these groups who need to understand what is happening, and need to do something."

Corinne expressed agreement with the SEP's call for a movement in defence of Assange and democratic rights based in the working class, commenting: "We need that population that is struggling under the current conditions to come forward and support Julian in any way it can, whether it's speaking to their neighbours or any other way. Julian needs a lot more support."

Dee, an insurance assessor, said: "I came to the rally because of the plight of Julian Assange, I think it is wrong that the government hasn't addressed any of the issues or done anything at all. I wanted to protest their failure to defend an Australian citizen. We need to draw

attention to this.

“Australian governments have been so spineless because of their ties to the US, Australia has always been in their pockets. We need to know what underhanded things our governments are carrying out. It is our right, and it’s why I am here today because that’s what WikiLeaks represents.”

“As the UN has said Assange is being arbitrarily detained. It’s really about government control and power. If Assange is kicked out of the Ecuadorian embassy, you can guarantee that no justice will be served. He will face the prospect of being sent to jail for the rest of his life or even assassinated.”

Dee condemned the complicity of the mainstream media in the persecution of Assange, stating: “It goes to show the agenda that these organisations have. People are clearly being paid to ignore certain things. There are journalists who aren’t real journalists anymore. The likes of the *Guardian* have smeared Assange’s name. They cover up the real injustice here.

“It’s the interests of capitalism and the corporations that come first. People like Julian Assange and the working class don’t have a voice.”

Chris travelled from the New South Wales Central Coast to attend the rally. She said: “I came to the rally to be with like-minded people who thought that Julian Assange had to be brought home. I’ve been following his case since before he was locked up in the Ecuador embassy.

“I used to live in Lismore and a lot of people up there think he’s a hero, as do a lot of people on the Central Coast. The way he’s being treated is wrong. And it’s not right for our government to keep just ignoring a citizen of ours being persecuted by a foreign power.

“As the powers-that-be buy up all the media, they can say what they like. They don’t want anyone to be talking about Julian Assange. They want to stop anybody that believes in free speech, so there are no more Chelsea Mannings and no more Julian Assanges. That would be good for the people that like to make war.”

Jack, an American post-graduate student, attended the meeting in Brisbane. He said: “I was astonished that you are the only political party in this country defending Assange, while everyone else is stabbing him the back. That is pathetic. Australia is acting as a sniveling puppet to the US, and refusing to support

Assange. It’s sickening. That is why I applaud you for standing up for him.

“Nine years ago, Assange was getting awards all the time and he was a big hero. I think it had to do with the people he was exposing at that time, and now he is exposing others.

“Because of the information that he released about Hillary Clinton, the entire Democratic Party establishment is now after him and now they have joined with the intelligence agencies in calling for his extradition and possible life sentence or execution. So now you have a bipartisan operation.

“Typically, the Democrats have often been more war-mongering than the Republicans. Look at the US wars. More of them have been started under the Democrats. Look at the Vietnam War and the role of Lyndon Johnson.

“The two parties compete for who can serve the military-industrial complex more, and that’s what Assange exposes. When you expose the US war machine, they’re not going to be very happy.”

Dejan, a young worker in Brisbane, said: “The fight to free Assange is important because if we do not do anything, it signals to the governments of the world that the people are too apathetic to take their rights into their own hands. This sets a precedent for governments to further tighten the noose around the remaining rights they so haughtily claim to champion.

“This rally has been a step in the right direction to raise awareness to Assange’s plight and the consequences of inaction. I very much enjoyed the speech by John Pilger and agree with him completely on the need for more action, such as the rally itself.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact