

Free Chelsea Manning!

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On Friday, a federal judge ordered the courageous whistle-blower Chelsea Manning imprisoned for refusing to testify before a secret grand jury that is drawing up fabricated charges against WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange on behalf of the Trump administration. In a savage action, the judge sentenced Manning to remain in jail until she purged her contempt of court by agreeing to testify or until the term of the grand jury expired, i.e., for an indefinite period.

Despite being offered immunity, Manning took a brave and principled stand by refusing to testify in the Star Chamber proceeding against Assange, who remains effectively imprisoned in the Ecuadorian embassy while the United States and Britain plot to have him evicted and extradited to the US to face espionage and/or conspiracy charges that could result in his execution. Upon refusing to cooperate with this pseudo-legal travesty, Manning was immediately jailed.

The imprisonment of Chelsea Manning is cruel, criminal and totally unjustifiable. The White House wants to set a precedent for jailing whistle-blowers and journalists who publish information critical of the military and state apparatus.

In 2010, Manning made public, via WikiLeaks, the “Collateral Murder” cockpit video of the July 12, 2007 US helicopter airstrike in Baghdad that killed 16 unarmed civilians, including two Reuters journalists, in cold blood.

Nine years after the start of the war in Afghanistan and six years after the invasion of Iraq, Manning made the courageous decision to expose to the public these and other war crimes that had been covered up by the Bush and Obama administrations with the aid of the corporate media.

As an intelligence analyst deployed in Iraq, Manning was able to obtain information documenting innumerable crimes and conspiracies, including footage of the May 4, 2009 airstrike in Granai, Afghanistan,

which killed up to 147 Afghan civilians.

WikiLeaks worked with news outlets, including the *New York Times*, the *Guardian* and *Der Spiegel*, to publish a series of documents leaked by Manning, later known as the Afghan War logs, the Iraq War logs and hundreds of thousands of State Department cables. The Iraq War logs showed that out of 109,000 recorded deaths in the Iraq War, 66,081 were civilians. The US diplomatic cables exposed American imperialist intrigues and conspiracies in dozens of countries.

No one involved in the planning or execution of this mass murder and criminality has been charged, let alone convicted and jailed. But Manning, then an army private who felt morally compelled to tell the world about these crimes, is once again behind bars.

The military, under Obama, arrested Manning in 2010. After spending years in solitary confinement in a military prison while awaiting her court martial, she was sentenced to 35 years in prison, of which she served close to seven. She was subjected to punitive measures that the United Nations said were tantamount to torture, driving her to attempt suicide on two occasions.

The imprisonment of Chelsea Manning and persecution of Julian Assange will forever stain the presidency of Barack Obama, who, running on a slogan of “hope and change,” presided over eight years of war, assassination and domestic spying. The Democratic Party has used the unsubstantiated allegation, denied by both Moscow and Assange, that WikiLeaks collaborated with the Russian government to publish emails hacked from the Democratic National Committee and the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign as the central rationale in its drive to censor the internet.

The pseudo-left organizations around the Democratic Party have embraced the persecution of WikiLeaks. While they initially used scurrilous rape allegations

against Assange as a pretext—claims that were dropped in 2017 by Swedish authorities—the real reason is their support for US imperialism, including its murderous regime-change operations in Libya and Syria.

Notably, neither *Jacobin* magazine, associated with the Democratic Socialists of America, nor *Socialist Worker*, the publication of the International Socialist Organization, has reported the jailing of Manning. Neither Senator Bernie Sanders, nor Congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar have spoken a word in her support.

While the organizations of the affluent upper-middle class have made clear their indifference to fundamental democratic principles, the real force capable of defending Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange is the international working class.

The documents provided by Manning to WikiLeaks, including more than 250,000 State Department cables, helped propel a series of working class upheavals all over the world, starting with the 2010–2011 uprising in Tunisia.

These protests spread throughout much of the Arab world, toppling the regimes of Tunisian strongman Ben Ali and Egyptian dictator Mubarak. US teachers and public-sector workers protesting education cuts and attacks on pensions in the United States carried signs bearing the slogan “Walk like an Egyptian.”

Heroic individuals like Chelsea Manning, Julian Assange and Edward Snowden cannot fight the state, with its vast apparatus of repression, on their own. Their struggles depend on the development of a social movement of the working class, which grasps that its struggle for social equality is inseparable from the defence of democratic rights.

Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning are class-war prisoners. They are imprisoned because the financial oligarchies that dominate the United States and the world see their efforts to inform the public about state crimes and conspiracies as an existential threat to their continued rule.

The jailing of Manning has sparked outrage among workers and young people all over the world.

Last weekend, hundreds of people attended a rally in Melbourne, Australia organized by the Socialist Equality Party to demand freedom for Manning and Assange, with thousands more all over the world viewing the live stream broadcast of the event. This

followed an SEP rally the previous weekend in Sydney that also drew a substantial audience, and included speeches by renowned journalists John Pilger and Joe Lauria, as well as civil rights leader Stuart Rees.

SEP National Secretary James Cogan, speaking at the Sydney rally, warned that the Trump administration’s persecution of Assange was an essential component of an international attack on democratic rights and moves toward dictatorship by the capitalist ruling classes all over the world. This was confirmed just days later with the jailing of Manning.

These rallies were organized on the basis of the perspective that the struggle to defend democratic rights must be based on the mobilization of the working class. The demonstration in Melbourne was read a statement of support from teachers in Oakland, California.

Amid an expanding global strike wave, from the United States to Latin America, Europe, North Africa and Asia, workers must take up the defense of democratic rights, including centrally the demand for the freeing of Chelsea Manning, Julian Assange and all other class-war prisoners.

This fight must be connected with the struggle against war and social inequality, and their source in the capitalist system.

The Socialist Equality Party (US) is playing a leading role in organizing opposition to the imprisonment of Chelsea Manning, which is inextricably linked with the fight to defend Julian Assange. Today we are announcing public meetings and rallies throughout the United States to demand her freedom.

We urge all of our American readers: Join the struggle to free Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange by attending the meeting or rally in your area!



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