

Free Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning!

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The fate of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, political prisoners victimized by US and world imperialism for exposing imperialist crimes and conspiracies, must be a focus of attention of the entire working class and all those who defend democratic rights.

Today marks one full year since WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange was cut off from the internet and his ability to communicate with the outside world. Assange remains confined to the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he was granted political asylum in 2012. There he is subject to constant and invasive surveillance.

Assange confronts the terrible choice of remaining trapped under conditions where he cannot communicate his views or protest his treatment, or leaving the embassy to be arrested by British police and face extradition to the US, where he faces trumped-up charges of espionage.

Underscoring the danger Assange faces, WikiLeaks last week drew attention to the fact that a US Department of Justice aircraft that was previously used for “rendering alleged Russian hacker Yevgeniy Nikulin to the US last year” had flown to London, only to return on Saturday. The dispatch of the plane was accompanied by an unexplained increase in the presence of plainclothes police officers around the Ecuadorian embassy in London.

Tomorrow will also mark three weeks since Chelsea Manning, who in 2010 provided WikiLeaks with documents exposing US war crimes, was jailed for contempt of court by a federal judge. Manning’s alleged “crime” is refusing to testify in a secret grand jury hearing against Assange. She is being held in solitary confinement, isolated 22 hours a day.

Manning faces another round of indefinite detention following her imprisonment for seven years under the Obama administration, in conditions the United Nations

Special Rapporteur on torture called “cruel, inhuman and degrading.”

The fate of Manning and Assange has gone virtually unreported by major news outlets. It has produced no protests from the American political establishment. Not a single Democratic member of Congress, including Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, has spoken about Manning’s imprisonment, let alone opposed it. The editorial board of the *New York Times* and its hypocritical columnists, who seize on alleged human rights violations when it serves the interests of American imperialism, are silent.

The Trump administration is leading the persecution of Assange and Manning. But its vindictive and unconstitutional vendetta is supported and abetted by the Democratic Party and its associated media outlets.

For more than two years, the Democrats, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* promoted the lie that WikiLeaks colluded with the Trump campaign and Russia to steal the presidency for Donald Trump. The media, based on unproven assertions by the US intelligence agencies, declared that WikiLeaks knowingly received hacked emails from the Russian government and conspired with the Trump campaign to “weaponize” this information against Trump’s opponent, Hillary Clinton.

The conclusion of the Mueller investigation has exposed the entire edifice of media lies that formed the basis of the anti-Russia witch hunt. Not only the charges of “collusion,” but the whole framework of the anti-Russia (and anti-WikiLeaks) campaign stands exposed as a fraud.

Meanwhile, genuine journalists like Assange, who do what journalists are supposed to do—inform the public and expose the secrets, lies and crimes of the government—are being hounded and persecuted.

With the collapse of the collusion narrative, there is a growing convergence between the Trump

administration, which has declared war on socialism, and its political opponents in the Democratic Party, which seeks to portray the growth of left-wing and socialist sentiment in the United States as the result of Russian “meddling.”

Their common agenda is an attack on democratic rights, including free speech, which finds its highest—or most criminal—expression in the persecution of Assange and Manning.

The complicity of the Democratic Party, the *New York Times* and the rest of the corporate media in the persecution of Manning and Assange is not surprising. One can expect nothing less from these defenders of US imperialism and conduits for the CIA and the Pentagon.

So too with the organizations of the middle-class pseudo-left that orbit the Democratic Party, which have maintained their silence on Assange’s imprisonment after demanding that he “face justice” over trumped-up sexual abuse allegations that were eventually dropped by prosecutors.

The *World Socialist Web Site* is waging a campaign to win the freedom of Assange and Manning. Earlier this month, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) of Australia held rallies in Sydney and Melbourne, each attracting hundreds of demonstrators. The Sydney rally featured leading journalists John Pilger and Joe Lauria, as well as civil rights leader Professor Stuart Rees, to demand Assange’s immediate and safe return to Australia.

Over the past two weeks, the SEP in the United States has held rallies and meetings opposing the jailing of Manning.

Speaking to the rally in Sydney, SEP (Australia) National Secretary James Cogan declared, “Julian is a class war prisoner. His persecution is above all an attack on the working class.” He added, “The Trotskyist movement, the WSWS and the SEP, is committed to mobilizing the working class in defense of not only Julian, but all democratic rights, as an essential component of the struggle to achieve genuine social equality, to oppose war and to oppose capitalism.”

As workers’ opposition grows throughout the world, from the masses of North Africa to Uber drivers in Los Angeles and auto workers in the US and Europe, Cogan’s concluding words bear repeating: “We are

sending a clear message to Julian Assange today and he will hear it: You are not alone, you have not been abandoned, you have not been forgotten. You will be freed.”



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