Defend Julian Assange!

Statement of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
6 April 2019

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia) condemns the stepped-up preparations to expel Julian Assange from London's Ecuadorian embassy and to force him into the custody of the British police. WikiLeaks reported yesterday that it had received information, from a source in the Ecuadorian state, that Assange's eviction from the building, where he sought asylum in 2012, would occur "within hours or days."

Assange has committed no crime. He has been the victim of an illegal US-led conspiracy aimed at abrogating his democratic rights and silencing him. Governments are persecuting the highly principled journalist because of his crucial role in WikiLeaks' historic exposures of war crimes, diplomatic intrigues and mass surveillance operations.

If evicted from the embassy, Assange will face immediate arrest by British authorities on trumped-up bail charges. The sole purpose of a British detention of Assange would be to facilitate extradition proceedings to the US, where he would likely face bogus espionage or conspiracy charges, on the basis of WikiLeaks' lawful publishing activities, carrying a potential sentence of life imprisonment or the death penalty.

The legal travesty of what is being prepared has been demonstrated by the Trump administration's jailing of Chelsea Manning, the courageous whistleblower who leaked the US army's Iraq and Afghan war logs and hundreds of thousands of diplomatic cables to WikiLeaks in 2010.

The jailing of Manning, in a desperate attempt to force her to give perjured testimony against the WikiLeaks founder, indicates that the US case against Assange cannot withstand serious judicial scrutiny. Manning has, with immense courage and at great personal cost, refused to comply with this legal travesty.

Assange's plight is an indictment of successive Australian governments and every parliamentary party. Beginning with the Greens-backed Labor government of Julia Gillard, no government has taken a single step to protect Assange, an Australian citizen. Instead they have actively participated in Washington's illegal campaign against him.

A host of organisations, including the corporate media, the Greens, the unions and the pseudo-left, who once hailed the WikiLeaks founder as a hero, have abandoned him, as they line up with the escalating drive to war and authoritarianism.

The SEP will stand candidates in the upcoming 2019 federal election. At the centre of its election campaign will be the SEP's defence of the democratic right to freedom of speech, freedom to access information, and our opposition to all government and media censorship.

We encourage and urge every worker, student and young person who agrees with these principles to join with the SEP in demanding that the Morrison government immediately fulfil its undeniable responsibility to protect Assange, an Australian citizen and journalist.

The Australian government must use its legal discretion and diplomatic powers to compel the British government to allow him to leave the UK, and return to Australia, with a transparent guarantee against extradition to the US.

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