

Workers and youth in Australia support Julian Assange

Our correspondents
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Socialist Equality Party (SEP) campaign teams won a strong response from workers and youth in Australia last weekend to the party's call for the defence of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange.

There is a deep well of opposition to the persecution of Assange for exposing the war crimes, regime-change conspiracies and mass surveillance operations of the US and its allies.

The SEP issued an urgent statement on Saturday condemning the stepped-up preparations to expel Assange from London's Ecuadorian embassy and hand him over to the British police. He faces the threat of extradition to the US on trumped-up espionage charges, for which he could face the death penalty.

The SEP statement made clear that the party and its candidates will make a central feature of its campaign for the forthcoming Australian election the defence of Assange and the courageous whistleblower Chelsea Manning. Manning has been jailed again in a desperate attempt to force her to give perjured testimony against the WikiLeaks founder.

The statement reiterated the demand, issued at recent rallies organised by the SEP in Sydney and Melbourne, that the Australian government must use its legal discretion and diplomatic powers to compel the British government to allow Assange, an Australian citizen, to leave the UK and return to Australia, with a public guarantee against extradition to the US.

In Sydney's southwest, **Jan**, a retail worker, denounced the attacks on Assange. "The establishment is trying to suppress the truth and intimidate those who will tell the truth," he said. "This is a democratic country, so the Australian government should let the truth prevail and let the public decide."

Asked why every Australian government had refused to defend Assange, Jan commented: "Australia is in an

alliance with the US and they are keeping quiet because they don't want to threaten that."

Jan agreed that the working class has to be mobilised in the defence of democratic rights. "The only way forward is to talk to the working class, to appeal to them and explain that their government is not acting in their interests."

In Melbourne, **Stefan**, who works in event management, said: "Anyone who goes after information is locked up. Australia is on a leash with America. They don't stand for anything. It will give a lot of fear to people if Assange goes to jail. It would mean you can't speak the truth."

"I have heard about the Ecuadorian president. He is working with England and the US. It is a big setup. The reason the US went to Iraq was for the oil. They want to cover things up, a lot of things."

Joe, an unemployed worker, said: "Assange should be protected by some agency—the Australian government for instance. He hasn't done anything wrong. He exposed what they were doing. He revealed their targets. This is damaging for them. They have a lot of things to hide."

In Inala, a working class suburb of Brisbane, **Paul**, a retired auto electrician, said Assange has been persecuted for informing people about the true character of the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

"The big wigs in the world don't want us to know the truth. They want to control the oil and power and everything else, so they can control us, so we have to pay for fuel, electricity and everything else and they're just more rich."

"Afghanistan was invaded because it is the gateway to all the oil and gas in central Asia, and the Americans and British could not get in there. It's landlocked

between China, Russia and Iran, which they don't like ...

"That's why they want to shut WikiLeaks down, so Assange can't tell the truth to the ordinary people. We are just being brainwashed by the mainstream news, which is just a cover-up...

"The Australian government should get his release. If they can't get a case against him, they should set him free. [Prime Minister] Julia Gillard called him a criminal, but she's the real criminal... She just wanted to wash her hands of Assange, and side with the Americans."

Louis, a transport operations worker, said the refusal of both Coalition and Labor governments to defend Assange was "disgusting."

"It's unjust. The guy has provided valuable information that embarrassed the US and now they are trying to condemn him for doing something that's right. It's kind of pathetic that the Americans can do such a thing. To be honest, they are losing it, actually."

"They are so afraid of the truth because they have done a lot of bad things. When you bring out the truth, they don't want to hear it. The truth hurts! Technically, the Americans have done terrorist acts during the war, with all the war crimes they have committed. WikiLeaks raised all these issues."

Leanne, a hospitality worker, said the threat to expel Assange from the Ecuadorian embassy was "wrong and absolutely corrupt."

"Assange hasn't had a fair run. He shouldn't have to hide and be afraid for his life for doing something that is exposing all the people who want to exploit everybody, and letting us ordinary people know what is going on in the world. Bring him back to Australia, like you say!"

"The governments are afraid of the truth, because there's more of us than there is of them... They want to keep us just like working ants, so they can run the world, and have us at their disposal. We are nothing for the people in power."

"They want to lock Assange away because he's strong. He wants to break out the news about what's happening and what they're doing... Anyone who speaks out is going to be stomped on..."

"I don't trust the mainstream media. It's all false, to make us ignore what is really going on, fill our heads full of nonsense and see a different picture than what

the truth is."

In Newcastle, **Thomas** said: "Assange and Wikileaks are important because the public has the right to know what their governments are up to. The entire world should know what's happening. If he is extradited to the US that will set a precedent for limiting free speech and the press internationally."

"The recent [social media] censorship bills that went through parliament will be used to even further censor what is happening in the world. Now they can get rid of things they disagree with politically. The mainstream media is a bit of a joke, they're not focussing on the real issues. They're used to distract people."

Maram, a University of Newcastle student, said: "If Assange is evicted, it means that he will likely disappear, he will be killed. If this happens, it means that everywhere, a government can murder and suppress not only journalists but the people. They will try to put important journalists in jail and censor any type of opposition among the people."

"This is about protecting the interests of the corporations, about getting more and more money, to hide the military preparations. It's the whole system. They want to know everything. They're increasing the censorship of the internet: on Google, Youtube, whatsapp."

"They want to prevent people from speaking out on this type of thing—the growth in social inequality, increasing poverty. They want to more and more divide people along racist hateful lines, preventing a proper understanding of what is happening."

"This is what the attack on Assange and Chelsea Manning is about. There is a connection."



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