

Supporters protesting outside Belmarsh prison speak out in defense of Julian Assange

Our reporters
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Sylv is from London and has been protesting outside the Ecuadorian embassy for several years in defence of Julian Assange.

She said, “It is a shame what happened and a real disgrace what the British government and Ecuadorian government are trying to do. They don’t care about human rights and they are breaking the law. And [Assange] is not even breaking the law and he ends up in prison so this is a huge injustice.”

Sylv said she became interested in Julian Assange and WikiLeaks because of “[w]hat they publish and why they publish it and because they uncover government secrets and we have the right know what is going on. We pay taxes and we have the right to know where the money goes.”

She thought the WikiLeaks’ publication of material from the US Democratic National Committee [DNC] was important “because no one is questioning what was published and no one is questioning Hillary Clinton and the DNC itself. Everyone was saying straight away where did you get it from and who is the source? Straight away they are questioning the journalist. Why is no one paying attention to what was published—the criminal activities of Hillary Clinton and her gang. No one is questioning it and she is freely walking.”

Sylv made a homemade placard for the rally reading, “The UK has no sovereignty. The UK must resist this attempt by the Trump administration!—Free Assange!”

She explained that these were the words that Assange said when he was being dragged out of the Ecuadorian embassy by police on Thursday. “I found it very powerful when Julian was taken out and they were important words that he was saying. Even though he was being taken away, he was still fighting, and he was still strong. He has not given up, he is resilient and that is what we need to be. He has always been here for us and we have to be here for him. He has risked his life and for a person to do something like that is a beautiful thing to do. It is very sad about where he is now.”

Asked about the implications for democratic rights of Assange’s seizure in the middle of London--the home of the Magna Carta and parliament--Sylv said, “That is disgusting.

You cannot trust your own government. You cannot really trust the Australian government because they took his passport away. Imagine if this happened to you or me or anyone?”

“There is no democracy if you are doing this to a publisher or a journalist. They [the governments involved] are just hypocrites and liars and they are the ones breaking the law and they are the one who need to be behind bars.”

Asked her views on the importance of international solidarity in defence of Assange, she said, “They [people internationally] definitely should be out there, at the US embassies, UK embassies, Australian Embassies. It can happen to any journalist. It happened in Malta with [investigative journalist] Daphne [Caruana Galizi]. She was killed because she uncovered the dirty government secrets, the same in Slovakia with Ján Kuciak, it can happen everywhere, it happened in Brazil.”

In relation to the role of the Labour Party refusing to demand Assange’s freedom, Sylv said, “They are not doing much either. They are trying to silence him, too. There is a power against us and there needs to be a massive change that needs to happen for humanity.

“I want everyone to fight for Julian Assange, I want everyone to be out there and to be vocal and not to hide. Don’t trust the mainstream media and their propaganda.”

Carolina Graterol, a documentary filmmaker, is a foreign correspondent for BBC World Service (Spanish section) and Telesur.

She said, “I am here with all my friends and activists to complain and denounce the imprisoning of Julian Assange and the possibility that he is extradited to the United States. We are opposing this measure. We think this is an affront against freedom of expression. Freedom of the world depends on Assange’s case.

“We know that the government of this country is colluding with [US President] Trump to send Julian Assange to United States, sadly. Seventy members of parliament were in favour of retention of Julian Assange and they are hoping that he gets extradited. We need to denounce and fight against the

breaking of the international law. The human rights of Julian Assange have been violated.

“Our society needs to know the truth, how our governments work. Crimes have been committed by our government. Their credibility is seriously being damaged. Journalists around the world are in danger.”

Graterol noted that Labour Party Shadow Home Secretary “Dianne Abbott made a passionate speech in the parliament in favour of Julian Assange,” but added, “We need to wonder about some MPs of the Labour Party, what kind of line they have... Sadly, at this moment, the conservatives of the Labour Party [who have written a letter to Home Secretary Sajid Javid backing Assange’s extradition to Sweden] have a united group. But I think the majority of the people believe in justice and they are on the side of Julian Assange.

“There are a lot of events happening around the world, not just in the UK, in defence of Assange. There are petitions going around social media, gathering lots of signatures against his extradition. We have been protesting for nearly nine years in front of the Ecuadorian Embassy and there are many more people campaigning for his freedom.”

Sadie, 25, from Matlock, is a jewelry design student. She had learned about Assange’s courageous stand through designer Vivienne Westwood, a well-known supporter of the WikiLeaks founder.

“Julian Assange is a truth speaker and all he did was publish information about government corruption, war crimes, torture and it’s illegal to arrest him. It’s against human rights. It’s more of a dictatorship government.

“I was reading a magazine yesterday, the media just slurred him [Assange], they all make him out to be a horrible person. They said he was bullying people in the embassy, he was really dirty. I think it’s all b.s., it’s more like they bullied him. He was doing the right thing, standing up for people, and especially with those videos [Collateral Murder video] he was showing the Iraqi people their history, why their families have been killed, unlawfully just ploughing down civilians and children in the street when they were doing nothing wrong.

“If he goes to America he could get life imprisonment or the death penalty, and all he’s trying to do is protect people and show them the truth of what’s happening. All the media are against him. I think he thought England was the only country that was going to help him... The US is after him and Ecuador helped him until it changed direction.

“It’s a scary thought that the government is against you... but we need everyone to open their eyes and realise there is a massive problem. Take climate change, it’s caused by capitalism. The people in Africa and the poorer countries, they’ll be hit first.

“Dianne Abbott made a really good speech [after Assange was seized] and they slated her. All he did was speak the truth about government corruption and this is what happens when you stand up.

“The problems in this country are the same in every single country.”

Dominic, 19, is an economics student at Kingston upon Thames University. He attended the protest with his younger brother Matthew.

He said, “I’ve spent the last few days outside the Ecuadorian embassy. I’ve been outside the Westminster Magistrate’s Court and now here outside Belmarsh prison. Julian Assange has published the most important journalistic documents of the last few decades. We all remember the Collateral Murder video and the documents of the Iraq and Afghan wars that revealed how they [US and UK] killed hundreds of thousands of civilians unnecessarily. We’re here to protest Assange being persecuted for that incredibly important journalistic work.

“They’ve come down on him hard because he’s the most effective journalist in the last few decades. He’s published concrete documents, none of which have been refuted. They’ve published thousands of them and none of which have shown to be false.

“The UK government want to hand him over to the US to be tortured, abused and debased possibly for decades.

“The rule of law doesn’t protect the people the state want to persecute, it doesn’t protect independent journalists, the rule of law is only for the rich. The rich believe they can get away with taking all the money, and we have to get the rich scared again so they’ll need to redistribute the wealth.”



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