

Why the defense of Julian Assange is necessary for all workers

The Steering Committee of the Coalition of Rank-and-File Committees
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The following statement in defense of Julian Assange was issued by the Steering Committee of the Coalition of Rank-and-File Committees.

We call on all workers to demand and fight for the immediate freedom of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

Assange has been brutally seized from the Ecuadorean embassy in the UK, where he has sought refuge for more than seven years. He now faces the danger of being transferred to the US, where he could be jailed indefinitely, tortured in solitary confinement or even given the death penalty on bogus charges of espionage.

The attack on Assange is an attack the entire working class! He needs our support!

Assange is not a criminal, but a hero. He has been hunted down and persecuted for exposing war crimes, including the slaughter of innocent civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan by US military forces. The real criminals are those who launched these wars, including George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and leading political figures in both the Democratic and Republican parties.

No one has been held accountable for wars that have led to the deaths of at least one million Iraqis and Afghans. Yet it is Julian Assange and former US Army analyst Chelsea Manning who are in jail for telling the truth!

The targets of the government vendetta are not just Assange, Manning and NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden. Also in the crosshairs are the hundreds of millions of workers and young people in the US and around the world who have been awakened by WikiLeaks exposures and are determined to know the truth.

Assange is a class war prisoner. The capitalist ruling elite is facing a rising tide of social unrest, from the

teachers' strikes in the US and Poland and the upheaval of *maquiladora* sweatshop workers in Mexico, to the Yellow Vest protests in France and the revolutionary upheavals in Algeria and Sudan.

The rich are trembling in their boots. They know their demands for endless givebacks, greater social inequality and more war are opposed by the vast majority. They know their media outlets are discredited. They know that their politicians are hated.

So they are responding with increasingly authoritarian methods to defend their wealth and power. Freedom of speech, of expression, of the press, of assembly, are under attack everywhere.

President Macron of France has dispatched troops against protesters. In Sri Lanka, the government is implementing "anti-terrorist" laws against its political opponents. In the US, Germany and other countries, the military and fascistic forces are being mobilized against immigrants and refugees.

This has always been the purpose of frameups and state repression of political opponents. One hundred years ago, on April 13, 1919, the famous socialist and labor organizer Eugene Debs was thrown in prison for violating the Espionage Act of 1917, the same anti-democratic law that Trump and the Democrats now plan to use against Assange.

Debs' sin was giving a speech in Canton, Ohio opposing President Wilson's plans to enter World War I. While the war would serve the interests of the "Wall Street gentry," Debs said, it would be "the working class who freely shed their blood and furnish the corpses," while never having a "voice in either declaring war or making peace."

These "autocrats, these tyrants, these red-handed robbers and murderers," Debs said, were called "patriots," while "the men who have the courage to

stand face to face with them, speak the truth, and fight for their exploited victims—they are the disloyalists and traitors.”

All workers have an immense stake in defending Assange. The attempt to railroad him to jail or worse coincides with the efforts to censor oppositional voices on the internet, including the *World Socialist Web Site*, and promote only government-backed news sources like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

The Democrats have peddled the lie that Assange colluded with the Russians to defeat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 president elections. This is being done to label all opponents of the US government as “Russian agents” and to crack down on social media, which workers rely on to communicate and coordinate their struggles, including the wave of teacher strikes over the last 14 months.

By making a brutal example of Assange, the Trump administration and the Democrats think they can silence all opponents of war, dictatorship and social inequality. They want to deprive workers of the knowledge they need to organize resistance and end their subjugation. Well, the workers will have their own say in the matter!

The Steering Committee of the Coalition of Rank-and-File Committees, which is made up of autoworkers, teachers, logistics and other workers from around the country, was established last year to spearhead the fight to build new organizations of class struggle, independent of the corrupt unions. We are fighting to unite all workers against the attacks on jobs and living standards and to oppose the austerity and social inequality produced by capitalism.

Democracy is not only important for workers to fight for their social rights, but the vigilance of workers, in the end, is the most decisive factor in the survival of democracy. Workers must say with one voice that democratic rights are non-negotiable!

We call on workers to take a stand and join the international campaign demanding the immediate release of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning.



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