

“Without truth and a free press we are doomed to further oppression”

# Teachers demand freedom for Assange and Manning

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Teachers, who have been in the forefront of a wave of global strikes and struggles over the last year, are speaking out forcefully against the attempts of the Trump administration and the Democratic Party to silence the courageous voices of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning.

Last Thursday’s illegal arrest of Assange and his forced abduction from the Ecuadorean Embassy in London has outraged workers and young people around the world. Likewise, there is overwhelming sympathy for the plight of whistleblower and class-war prisoner Chelsea Manning, who was re-imprisoned March 8 for refusing to testify against Assange.

Readers of the *WSWS Teacher Newsletter* have demanded the freedom of Assange and Manning, while expressing grave concerns for the growing suppression of democratic rights and the sharp turn to authoritarianism internationally.

“In a scene eerily echoing Eugene Debs’ imprisonment almost one hundred years ago to the day for violating the Espionage Act, Julian Assange was handcuffed away from the Ecuadorian embassy for the mere crime of telling the truth,” wrote Doug Martin, a former university professor, current special education aide and author of *Hoosier School Heist*, an expose of the charter school industry in Indiana.

He emphasized, “The attacks on Assange and Chelsea Manning are meant to usher in complete authoritarian rule, with more silenced voices, more surveillance, more corruption, and more war crimes. We, members of the working class, must organize. We must shout from the rooftops our demand that Assange,

Manning, and all whistleblowers be freed.”

Steve, a veteran K-12 teacher and member of the Steering Committee of the Coalition of Rank-and-File Committees, stated, “The arrest of Julian Assange, the continued imprisonment of Chelsea Manning, and the forced exile of Edward Snowden are indications of the increasing use of the threat of judicial imprisonment by the American capitalist ruling class to silence and eliminate critics and those who challenge the lies and threats of the American ruling class.

“Both Manning and Assange are imprisoned for their exposure of the war crimes, crimes against humanity, aggression and genocide carried out by the US military and corporations, supported and led by the US government.

“Their imprisonment must awaken those around the world and those in the United States. Defense of Assange and Manning is an important, vital part of the movement for social justice and peace for the working class and the oppressed peoples of the world to uphold. They are political prisoners and must be defended and freed!”

The Steering Committee of the Coalition of Rank-and-File Committees has issued a powerful statement for mass distribution, noting in part, “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.”

Another educator who regularly reads the *Teacher Newsletter* condemned the arrest of Assange and the US plans to carry out his extraordinary rendition to the US. “This is a way to scare people from exposing the corruption. The government is no better than the mafia. They lie, cheat the people, murder people, steal resources from other countries leaving these otherwise wealthy countries poor. They take our tax dollars to keep themselves rich while being sure not to give us benefits.

“Julian is a hero for exposing these monsters, yet even though they were exposed, none of them *ever* pay for their crimes. Instead they want to kill the messenger! We need a completely new government, not a patch job. *Free Julian, the hero of the people!*”

Ben Katchor, an associate professor at Parsons The New School, saluted the courageous actions of Assange: “By classifying information, the US government is not keeping us safe, just hiding its criminal activity around the world. Julian Assange did more than any contemporary journalist to reveal this criminal activity.”

Community college professor of biology Natalie emphasized, “As someone who grew up in USSR and witnessed censorship, I fully understand the value of the right of free press to hold the government bureaucracy accountable. True democracy is impossible without this right.

“As an educator, I teach my students to gather and analyze the data, and make conclusions based on it, to think for themselves, and do not be swayed by someone else’s opinions. WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange provided us with the valuable data about the behavior and decisions made by the leadership of our country behind the closed doors.

“This disclosure embarrassed many powerful people on both sides of the American power structure. They now seek to silence the last vestiges of free press by making an example out of Wikileaks and Assange: ‘This is what will happen to you if you don’t fall in line.’

“The history of the country in which I was born teaches me the importance of speaking up for what you believe is right. This is why I feel compelled to raise my voice and demand that the British authorities recognize the unjust character of their actions, and release Julian Assange. I am also calling on Trump

administration to drop the charges against the publisher and stop their attempts to silence the free press.”

Canadian educator Louise Manelia added, “Because if we do not support the truth then we are left with reverse Darwinism ... Survival of the Unfit (Through the ascendancy of the Ruthless).” Asked about her thoughts on the political situation and education she said, “The wealth gap is the push for the terrible state of most of what were once viable public services ... I have been shocked by some of the horrific salaries that I have heard of in the USA not to mention the push for privatization of not only direct education but all the services provided to make the system run.

“Change must be imminent. It will only happen through rank-and-file workers, in this case teachers, collectively refusing to accept oppressive working conditions and pay. Without truth in general and without a free press we are doomed to further oppression by lawless and thoughtless ruling classes who do not appear to have any scope of understanding of the value of the contributions of the working classes to the viable functioning of society.

“Assange’s efforts to illuminate the underbellies of the results of the thoughtless and ruthless practices of the oligarchs and their minions are essential to an awakening that might lead to change.”

The *WSWS Teacher Newsletter* calls on all workers and young people and all those who uphold democratic rights to join us in this fight.



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