

Germany: SGP European election campaign wins support for Julian Assange in Stuttgart

Our reporters
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Teams from the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) recently campaigned among workers and youths in Stuttgart, inviting them to its April 27 election meeting and distributing WSWs articles calling for freedom for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

Most of the passersby who stopped expressed their support for Assange and his liberation following his April 11 arrest by British police at the Ecuadorian embassy in London. As could be seen in Stuttgart, very few believe the official lies that the bourgeois media propagates about Assange.

As the WSWs article “Freedom for Julian Assange!” states, “In the working class there is overwhelming sympathy for Assange. A dividing line has opened up in social, economic and political life. The ruling elites are shedding their democratic pretences.” The bourgeois media and the pseudo-left organisations defend the state and the dictatorship of the financial oligarchy, so it is “the working class, the broad mass of the population, that must be mobilised to defend Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning and all class war prisoners. The demand for their freedom must be a rallying cry for the global working class.”

The discussions in Stuttgart showed that this assessment is completely correct. Many recalled that some years ago the media had treated the WikiLeaks revelations somewhat more favourably, reporting the US war crimes and secret diplomatic documents published by WikiLeaks. Today, however, after Assange has been arrested and threatened with a possible death sentence if extradited to the US, not a single bourgeois newspaper openly advocates his defence.

Others noted that his case shines a spotlight on the freedom of the press. Not just investigative journalists,

but any reporter who raises critical questions could be persecuted and suppressed using the arguments now employed against Assange.

In the Stuttgart city centre, Leo said, “I’m glad you’re organising this campaign. Assange is a tragic figure. Everyone must support him now and work for him to be free again. Assange has challenged the most powerful countries in the world by exposing their war crimes and criminal activities against the people. He had the strength to take on the CIA and other powerful intelligence agencies.”

Leo said he did not know any other left-wing party that was conducting such a campaign. He asked what differentiated the SGP politically from the other parties. SGP campaigners explained that the party advocates for a socialist programme based in the working class to overthrow the capitalist world order; the SGP is part of a world movement, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

He inquired about other sections of the ICFI in Europe. When he learned that the SGP is conducting its European election campaign together with the British and French sections to mobilise workers across Europe against militarism, the rise of the right and social inequality, he promised to attend the election meeting in Stuttgart.

Florian said that he had signed the election petition for the SGP in February and was pleased it was now on the ballot and was taking part in the European elections. The SGP has had to collect over 4,000 voter signatures for its participation to be accepted by the Federal Returning Officer.

Having followed the WSWs coverage of Assange, Florian agreed that only the working class could effectively defend Assange. He said he could not find any statements from other parties comparable to those

of the Fourth International. He said he was very worried about the rise of far-right parties across Europe. He also wanted to come to the election meeting to continue the discussion.

Marion said she supported the SGP campaign, adding that Assange's arrest was a massive attack on basic democratic rights. She was very worried about the "data collection monopoly of Google, Facebook and Co." She saw this as a great danger to ordinary people and as a threat to democracy.

"The Internet is part of our lives," she said, and it was terrible that Google did not try to resolve users' issues, but rather, sought to control the Internet and expand its influence globally. Marion mentioned the European Union (EU) law on copyright reform, which involves the use of so-called upload filters and which will further increase Internet censorship. "I expect they will use this reform to expand the monitoring of the Internet," she said.

Jonas explained that he worried above all about how much the neo-Nazis were already determining politics in Germany: "This is dangerous. If the AfD [Alternative for Germany] and other right-wing groups take over, it will definitely lead to war." The re-arming of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) by the grand coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats reminded him "of the Nazis in the thirties."

"Something must be done about that," Jonas said. "This is the first time I have received an election manifesto entitled, 'Against Nationalism and War! For socialism!' I like that. I'll read that."

An effective defence of Julian Assange could not be expected from the major political parties, Jonas continued. "They do not care about the refugees, when they are attacked by Nazis or the police." He said he supported the SGP campaign to free Assange. "In this day and age, it's hard to uncover the truth," Jonas concluded. "I admire what you are doing."



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