

Protester at Assange jail sentencing: “That was a declaration of an outlaw state”

Our reporter
1 May 2019

Dozens of supporters of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange protested outside Southwark Crown Court yesterday, where he was handed down a sentence of 50 weeks in prison on bail charges in a vindictive ruling by Judge Deborah Taylor.

Among those protesting were supporters of the Julian Assange Defence Committee, residents of London and people who had travelled from several European countries.

Homemade placards and banners read, “Assange’s Freedom is our Freedom,” “Free Julian Assange: Jail the War Criminals,” “Hands Off Assange,” “Free Julian Assange—Nobel Peace Prize Nominee,” and “No Extradition: Free Julian Assange.”

Slogans chanted included, “One decision—No Extradition!” “Free, Free Julian Assange!” “US UK—Hands Off Assange” and “Moreno is Corrupt!”

To the assembled media pack, protesters chanted, “Do your job, tell the truth!”

Kevin and Rachel are US citizens and travelled together from Denmark to support Assange.

“We flew in at midnight last night. We found out the hearing had been moved up and so we rushed right over,” said Kevin.

“He is one of the last few journalists in the world and he protects people who share information on corruption. There are so few places we can do that. You mentioned the *Guardian*—they were given all of these documents by Edward Snowden and they disappeared. *The Intercept*, I believe, just took down all of the documents that Snowden shared as well. There are no public records of those documents anymore. So many journalistic outlets are failing us right now.

“Assange is one of the few people who enabled everyone else—the regular people—to share this information with the world and to lose that is awful. I

truly hope he is released, but I don’t believe that will happen.

“As a US citizen, the Iraq war logs was my first exposure to Julian Assange. Back then, the Democrats were singing his praises as a hero for exposing war crimes and I really thought that with everything that had happened—the fraudulent election of George W. Bush, all of the massive war crimes—that things were going to turn around because of Assange’s efforts. But here I am and every time he exposes something it just seems to get worse despite his efforts.”

Commenting on the secret grand jury against Assange empanelled under Obama, Kevin said, “It doesn’t really matter who is in charge. People are so afraid of Trump right now, but there’s the crimes of George W. Bush, Obama began the sealed [grand jury] proceedings and they’re continuing under Trump, and I think that no matter who wins the elections it will continue. That’s why I’m so terrified of US extradition. I truly believe that if he gets into US hands then he will disappear or be sentenced for who knows how long.”

Rachel said, “WikiLeaks is international and has helped the world over, I feel especially for the United States. With the war logs we found out how invasive the CIA spying was within our country, which they’re not supposed to be doing. It’s helped me understand the world better, and politics better.”

A trained counsellor, Rachel spoke about the treatment Assange has faced: “Even before the embassy, he was under house arrest, so it’s very horrible. And he’s been vindicated. One of the first things he told his lawyers was ‘I told you so’.”

Lucia explained, “I come from Barcelona and I am here because I am truly concerned with the situation and what is happening to Julian Assange. I don’t think he should be treated in this way. He is a hero and doing

us all a great service in exposing the truth. But he is being treated as if he had committed the crimes he has revealed.

“There is no democratic rule in this society, as is proved by how they snatched Assange from the embassy. They are saying no one is above the law, but what they are doing is unlawful.

“There is a big media campaign trying to smear Julian, so there are people who don’t know what to believe because of the allegations in Sweden. There is all sorts of petty stuff being spread by Ecuador on what he was supposedly doing in the embassy. It’s just ridiculous, measured against the importance of what he published.

“There is no opposition from the politicians to this. There is a lack of support and I don’t understand why. It’s one of the biggest issues globally. They are all taking a voice away from us, everything, even censoring social media. The mainstream media are filtering everything. There needs to be some radical changes.”

Jeff was among the protesters able to listen to proceedings from inside the court. He said, “The verdict was predictable but no less shocking because the lawyer defending Assange laid out in great detail how he had genuine fears when he skipped bail in 2012. It was half an hour by the lawyer laying out all the relevant details and the Judge [Deborah Taylor] responded to that with a pre-prepared statement saying that what Assange had done was an insult to the British judicial system. The judge confirmed his lack of faith in that system today.”

Jeff said of the judge’s statement that the UN ruling that Assange has been arbitrarily detained by the UK authorities since 2010 is not binding on her court: “That is a declaration of an outlaw state ... Who does she think these UN Commissions consist of? They are legal experts, jurists. I think this is very squalid and I think the role of the mainstream media and the *Guardian* in particular, but also the BBC and everyone, has been very bad.

“I heard the lawyer for Assange saying that he fears going to Guantanamo Bay and that he fears spending several decades in a US Supermax facility. He might expect even the death penalty if extra charges are added to the indictment under the 1917 Espionage Act. So, strange as it may sound, there could be a non-American

citizen convicted under the Espionage Act of treason to the US.”

Asked about the response of Assange’s supporters in the courtroom to the sentencing, Jeff said it was one of “contempt, derision and a complete lack of faith in our justice system. ... if justice isn’t seen to be done, it’s not done. Assange was a de facto political prisoner for seven years and now he is a political prisoner, de jure.”

Labour Shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott made a “very spirited defence of Assange [in stating that he should not be extradited to the US] but we haven’t seen any moves [from the Jeremy Corbyn leadership] since to stand in defence of Assange and against this whole process of extradition to the United States. “Under pressure they have said that he has questions to answer in relation to Sweden.

“I would like them to go further and oppose the Swedish case. If you read [lawyer] Geoffrey Robinson’s memoirs, he has a chapter on Assange called ‘Sweden and Ecuador.’ In it he breaks down in detail how Assange wouldn’t face justice in Sweden. He would face a secret trial behind closed doors and Sweden has a 100 percent compliance rate when it comes to extradition requests to US extradition. The Swedish case is just another means to get Assange to America.”

Jeff read many alternative news sources and opposed as “completely false” the “lie” by Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno “that Assange receives information from all kinds of people but only publishes it on his enemies. He has published thousands of documents on Russia that have been used in court cases, on China, documents embarrassing to the Assad regime in Syria.”



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)