

“Today’s protest is a symbol of the fight for freedom”

## French Yellow Vests join Assange extradition protest in London

Our reporters  
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WSWS reporters spoke to demonstrators outside Westminster Magistrates Court protesting plans to extradite WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. Dozens of protesters from the Yellow Vest movement in France, which has been opposing “president of the rich” Macron for months, attended.

**Vivien** travelled from Paris to support Assange. She said: “For us, he is the first Yellow Vest. A person that was willing to fight against the government for peace and freedom. Today he is in court and there is a high risk that he will be sent to the US. On the 5th of April we started protests outside the Australian embassy in France and we have gone to the UK Embassy and the Foreign Minister’s Office.

“Over seven years, little by little, the media has misled people, introducing ‘fake news’ lies about Assange. Plenty of lawyers and journalists in France will claim they support him, but when it comes to actually protesting, they stay at home.

“Today’s protest is a symbol of the fight for freedom. We are talking about human rights. We are talking about justice. We are talking about how we can live in a better society. Assange has brought to light information that can stop wars. He is nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for a reason. His journalism has received so many awards around the world. But it’s not reported. He’s like a ghost in the mainstream press. So we have to protest.”

**Alice** is a cook who lives in Paris. She said the Yellow Vests “saw a connection between the revolution in information that Julian Assange is a symbol of, and the revolution we want in France for free speech and real justice. These are the two fundamentals. So we had demonstrations in France on

May 1 and we got a bus and then came here.”

Alice described the intensifying violence used by the French government against the Yellow Vests. “There is the aggression we face and then afterwards there is the lying in the media about what happened. We have had more than 2,000 injured and hundreds really badly injured. More than 20 people have lost their eyes.

“We wanted fiscal justice but now we want social justice. We are appealing for democracy and now 70 percent of the people agree with the aims of the Yellow Vests. This is even with the media against us!”

Noting that after the Notre Dame fire, French billionaires offered hundreds of millions of euros for its restoration, yet nothing is made available for the urgent social needs of the population, Alice said: “That is yet more evidence of the social injustice that we face. That is why we want to get rid of the whole system. We don’t trust them, just like we don’t trust them to give justice to Julian Assange.”

“There should be many more people here for Assange and in support of an information revolution. We have to face the responsibility that this man had to face himself. He should be thanked for that.”

**Florian**, a Yellow Vest from Lyon, commented: “The main reason [we are here] is for freedom of speech and of the press. We’re here to support someone wrongly convicted by governments, just for saying the truth. It joins with what we’re fighting in France with the Yellow Vest movement, so we came to show our support.”

Asked about the support for Assange in France, Florian said: “WikiLeaks speaks for itself. It’s revealed so many truths about what our governments are actually doing. Most people in France understand the

issue and think like us: that he shouldn't be extradited, he only told the truth, divulged illegal activities. But the media are playing a big role in trying to change that perception, making him the villain instead of the good guy that he is.

"It's similar for us. In France, a lot of people don't know what's going on with the Yellow Vests because the media either don't cover it or don't tell the truth. So that's why a lot of independent media have gained authority in France.

"An example of how media manipulation is happening in France at the moment is that yesterday, at our protest in Paris, some people went to seek shelter in the entrance of a hospital and they broke the gate on the way through. They did that because there was tear gas in the street and the police were charging. The media said the hospital was attacked by extremists in the Yellow Vest movement.

"It's good to see this demonstration... I'm glad there are people from all over the world, Spain, Italy, Denmark, the USA, France. People feel connected and want to do something over this issue."

**Lucia** came from Barcelona to support Assange and also protested outside his jail sentencing hearing the previous day at Southwark Crown Court. She was one of the few individuals not from the mainstream media who managed to get into the tiny courtroom to witness the hearing.

Lucia explained: "Julian was on a video link and the judge asked him whether he wants to consent with the request for extradition, whether he wants to surrender to the US. Julian said, and I remember it very clearly, that he is not going to surrender to extradition to the US for doing journalism and helping many people.

"Julian looked calm, courageous. No members of the public could get into the court, only people with press cards."

Referring to the demonstration, including the action by protesters who temporarily blocked the main road outside the court, Lucia said: "We need to cause disruption, to a certain point. It's great that there are Yellow Vests from France today. I'm very happy to be here to see that."

**Larry Hyett** has been involved in a 24-hour vigil outside Belmarsh prison where Assange is being incarcerated, which has been threatened by the Labour Party-run Royal Borough of Greenwich council. He

said: "We have support from the council workers themselves, but the council leadership and police have issued an ASBO [Anti-Social Behaviour Order] for minor things. They've also cautioned us for encouraging others to protest, as if those people are children and can't make decisions for themselves.

"The vigil is not just for Julian but for free speech as a whole. We've got to realise what real criminality is. We don't want to lose our rights and we can't rely on those above us or the mainstream media to protect them. Thankfully I think the protests are gathering pace now."



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