

SEP (Sri Lanka) May Day meeting demands freedom for Assange and Manning

The Abbotsleigh Estate Workers Action Committee—Sri Lanka
3 May 2019

The following statement, demanding the release of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange and whistleblower Chelsea Manning, was issued by the Abbotsleigh Estate Workers Action Committee in Sri Lanka's central tea plantation district. It was presented to the May Day public meeting held by the SEP on May 1, 2019 in Colombo, and was unanimously approved by the audience.

Presenting the resolution, K. Ratnayake explained that the SEP had only just received news that Assange had been sentenced by a British court to 50 weeks imprisonment, and emphasised the urgency of intensifying the campaign to release him.

We, the Abbotsleigh Estate Workers' Action Committee, demand the immediate release of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and whistle-blower Chelsea Manning, who are in jail for exposing the crimes of US imperialism against mankind.

Since he was dragged from the Ecuadorean embassy in London and arrested by British police, Assange has been jailed in solitary confinement in Belmarsh prison in southeast London. He faces the danger of extradition to the US and jailing, torture and even capital punishment on false charges of espionage.

Manning, a former US military analyst, has been jailed since March 8 for her continued refusal to testify before a grand jury against Assange. She had provided secret information on brutal US war crimes to WikiLeaks.

Assange and Manning are not criminals. They have carried out an immeasurable and vital service to the international working class by exposing US war crimes, including the killing of thousands of innocent people in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The attack on Assange and Manning is an attack on

the basic democratic right to freedom of expression. It is a warning to all journalists and the media, who dare to expose crimes against mankind, that they will face the same fate. The attack on Assange and Manning will be seized upon by the ruling class in every country as a precedent for the suppression of the democratic rights of working people.

The bourgeois ruling classes and financial aristocrats are terrified of the resurgence of the class struggles of the international working class. These include more than 100,000 plantation workers and over 200,000 public school teachers involved in recent strike struggles.

The ruling elites are increasingly turning to right wing policies against working people who fight against social counter-revolutionary policies and the suppression of democratic rights.

In Sri Lanka, the government of President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has used the Easter Sunday terrorist attack to suppress the democratic rights of the working class by re-implementing the draconian emergency regulations that were used during the 30-year war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. It has unleashed security forces throughout the country, with sweeping powers to arrest, detain and imprison the people.

The government is increasingly turning towards a police state. All the parties of the political establishment have rallied around the government's terror campaign against the working class. At the same time, the so-called "left" parties and the trade unions are directly or indirectly supporting it.

Freedom for Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning can only be assured through a united struggle of the international working class. Therefore, we, the

Abbotsleigh Estate Workers' Action Committee, call on workers and youth in Sri Lanka and internationally to join the international campaign demanding the immediate release of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning.



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