

Call to free Julian Assange raised in Taiwan on Labor Day

A correspondent
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The World Socialist Web Site received the following report from a correspondent in Taiwan.

Taipei, May 1, 2019: “Julian Assange has won many supporters in Taiwan,” declared Linda Arrigo, a key human rights activist working to support the free Julian cause at today’s Taiwan’s Labor Day march.

In spite of constant rain more than 5,000 workers blanketed the streets of Taipei in the nation’s annual Labor Day demonstration. The marchers began at Ketagalan Blvd in front of the Presidential Office and marched past the Ministry of Labor, Control Yuan and Legislative Yuan.

“Many workers, who had never heard of Assange, were very curious about our delegation,” stated Arrigo. “We were constantly being asked about Assange and what’s happening to him. And we made scores of contracts with labor people.”

More than 100 unions, big and small came from every part of Taiwan, including Kaohsiung, Tainan, Yilan, Taoyuan, and Maoli, added Hwang Jian-tai, secretary general of the Taiwan Confederation of Trade Unions. Their chief demands were more public holidays, increased maternity leave from 60 to 90 days, and legislation that would give workers the right to take long-term leave without pay in order to care for sick relatives.

Taiwan politics and much labor union thinking is still locked in a time-warp after being moulded by decades of authoritarian single party KMT [Kuomintang] rule that used company unions as a means to manipulate workers. In 2017 the average worker here put in 2,035 hours compared with 1,744 hours for those in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In spite of this, their salaries are much lower.

During the day, it was stressed how WikiLeaks serves

as a deterrent to war and is a tool for peace. If WikiLeaks was around the Iraq War could not have happened since it could have exposed the lie of “weapons of mass destruction.” And, had it been running in 1964, there would be no Vietnam War, since it could have exposed the fraudulent claims of the Tonkin Gulf incident, the excuse for the American invasion of Vietnam.

The participation of the Free Assange Group was one of several events which have helped to introduce this issue to the Taiwan and the Chinese-speaking world. Supporters include the Taiwan Human Rights Association, Taiwan Amnesty International, Taiwan Environmental Protection Union (TEPU), the Taiwan Green Party, Taiwan Trees Party and an outspoken law maker. The group will have a press conference today in the Taiwan Legislature to outline the plight of Assange.



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