

Socialist Equality Party holds rally in Berlin to demand freedom for Assange and Manning

Our reporters
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On Saturday, the Socialist Equality Party (Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei—SGP) of Germany held a rally near the British embassy in central Berlin to demand the freeing of persecuted journalist Julian Assange and whistleblower Chelsea Manning.

The rally was the latest in a series of international demonstrations and meetings organized by sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in defense of Assange and Manning, including a public meeting held by the SEP (UK) in London and attended by 150 people on May 12, and a demonstration by Indian supporters of the ICFI in Chennai, the capital of the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, on May 11.

Overall around 300 people attended the SGP rally in Berlin, including workers, students from the city's universities, and a number of supporters of Assange who brought hand-made banners in German and English to the protest. The event was part of the ICFI's campaign in the European elections and was followed by a final election campaign meeting that afternoon, which a number of those who participated in the rally also attended.

The demonstration was an international event. It was chaired and introduced by SGP Assistant National Secretary Christoph Vandreier, was addressed by SEP (UK) National Secretary Chris Marsden and SGP National Secretary Uli Rippert, and heard greetings sent by the SEP sections in Australia and the United States. Philip Tenter, an SGP candidate in the European elections, addressed the rally on behalf of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.

All speakers denounced the support of the governments of both Britain and Germany for the illegal rendition operation to bring Assange to the United States and try him under the Espionage Act for having published evidence of US war crimes, and

opposed the ongoing US-led war preparations against Iran. They called Assange a class war prisoner and pledged that the ICFI will intensify its campaign and provide workers and young people with a socialist perspective on which to secure freedom for Assange and Manning, as the spearhead of the fight against war, police state repression and social inequality.

The *World Socialist Web Site* will publish the speeches and greetings together with a video of the rally in the coming days.

WSWS reporters and members of the SGP spoke with numerous workers and youth at the rally. All expressed their solidarity with Assange and denounced the criminal politics of the capitalist governments and the media.

Kerstin decided to come to the rally after she saw a "Free Julian Assange" poster on a lighting pole the day before. She lives in the working-class district of Berlin-Hellersdorf and works as a Spanish, Portuguese and English translator.

"The video 'Collateral Murder' and the war crimes that WikiLeaks had uncovered were distributed by worldwide major publications. These are clearly issues of public interest to society as a whole. For this reason alone, Assange and Manning should not be prosecuted."

Kerstin added that the rally was particularly important right now. "The brutal way in which Assange and Manning are being treated is a clear indication that so far only the tip of the iceberg has been uncovered. The rulers are trying to silence them because they are in the process of committing far worse war crimes than before."

Eva is an accountant and works in Berlin. She called "the arrest of Julian Assange incredibly unjust" and explained: "It is a violation of international law. He did

nothing but expose the war crimes of the US and that was legal and important. What he did as a journalist was heroic. I'm very grateful for everything he published, especially the Collateral Murder video. That shocked me a lot."

She continued: "With the arrest of Julian Assange, freedom of the press is put in detention. The same applies to Chelsea Manning. I saw her video yesterday. She is a hero. She knows what is threatening her and yet she says no to this injustice. She won't let herself be drawn down. She must be released immediately."

Eva mentioned the US war plans against Iran and warned: "The German government is constantly bowing to the US. If tomorrow war against Iran begins, the German government will participate in it, even if it is only through arms deliveries." The treatment of Assange had to be seen in this context, she said: "The persecution of Julian Assange should be a warning to all those who tell the truth. That's why I'm here today."

Shoaib, a 24-year-old engineering student who moved to Berlin from Pakistan, attended the rally after receiving a flyer. "I thought when I saw it that I needed to come," he said. "What Assange did was to bring the truth to the people, to the masses. After seven years, the movers and shakers of the world have got him. But he gave us an idea and they cannot destroy it. The truth cannot be hidden and sooner or later it does come out."

"I already knew before today that he founded WikiLeaks and what he published about the war crimes in Iraq and the UK's role later documented in the Chilcott report, which confirmed what Tony Blair did and how the war started. When I grew up in Pakistan they were not peaceful times and I know how people can live in fear. If you take a man in Iraq in their 40s, he has seen war over his entire life. The Iran-Iraq war, then the attacks by the US in the 1990s and in 2003, and now ISIS. Whole lifetimes have been destroyed. It's all about power and who controls the region."

"If you see in the official media, they are not really free and fair. They should be coming out and speaking for Assange. Wikileaks revealed something very evil to the people, that it's the people they vote for doing these things. Sooner or later the government will come for the official media as well." He added that Assange must be defended today because "the liberties we have today are the result of the activism of previous

generations, and if we do not continue that fight then we will lose everything we currently have."

"If your idea is something that stands on truth and value, then sooner or later every idea has its time and will come," he said. "Now I know about the SGP. I didn't know about this party but they're introducing me to this and I've been here for a year, and haven't participated in any kind of activism."

The speakers spoke "about capitalism and the wealthy and poor," he said. "Capitalism has existed for 40 years since the fall of the Soviet Union as the only order of the world. It's like one percent of our entire economic history. So I don't believe there is no alternative to capitalism. There is an alternative and that is socialism."



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