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Protesters speak out in defence of Assange

Our reporters
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WSWS reporters spoke to some of those protesting outside Westminster Magistrates Court against efforts to extradite Julian Assange to the United States.

Ezra, 28, a sonographer from New Zealand, said, “I have come here today to show solidarity for Julian Assange, but it’s not just about Assange.

“It’s going to have a huge effect on journalism and the big one that affects all of us--democracy. We are told that we live in a democratic society, but this proves it’s not the case. I guess it’s one of the falling dominoes in a whole list of things that will come afterwards if he’s sent to America.”

Assange was being persecuted in particular because of “the information that he revealed to do with the United States, war crimes, which is the issue that actually we should be talking about! We should be talking about those people that have committed those crimes and we are not.”

“It has been quite difficult to speak with friends and family. It’s always, ‘oh-he’s a rapist’ and its stuff that’s printed in the media. They don’t hear a lot of the real stuff that’s going on and they’ve made these judgments about him that are completely incorrect because of the rhetoric that’s been published in the press.

“That’s why WikiLeaks is such a great organisation because they don’t edit things, they don’t redact things. They say, ‘This is the information’, and you decide your opinion on the issues.”

Asked why the media were lying so blatantly about Assange, Ezra said, “Because the people who run the big media organisations and the politicians are all working side by side and they all profit from these issues that Julian Assange has given evidence to. What

he does is harming their self-interest and that’s why everyone is against him.”

Ezra explained that she had attempted to contact Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn about the witch-hunt of Assange. “We were at the World Press Freedom Day, and they were having an event. Jeremy Corbyn was speaking via video link and it was a few days before Julian had his first hearing here at the courts and he didn’t mention Assange at all. I wrote him a letter as he’s my MP and I put it through his mailbox. He lives down the road from me, and I said to him, ‘It’s very sad that your position in the Labour Party now had rendered you redundant to all the things that you believed in and stood for your whole life--Palestine, against Trident [nuclear missiles], and Assange.’ He’s not effective anymore on any of these big topics.”

Joe Brack said his own family had faced persecution. “If we want to end the refugee crisis, we need to end the wars. My grandfather, Morris, who came over from Poland in 1912 when he was 14, he slept in his uncle’s butchers’ shop and became a butcher in the end. He was fleeing persecution from the local Poles and from the Russians and it was a very unsafe warzone prior to the First World War. During the Second World War, every single member of his family that hadn’t left Poland was killed.

“Julian Assange has highlighted the issues about these wars, He’s highlighted that the UK, the US, the French, German and other governments are complicit in supplying ordinance and hardware to the Saudi and Emirate regimes. They’ve also assisted with personnel on the ground, with intelligence reports. They have the English and American spotters who send over the drones, so we [the British government] are very

complicit in war crimes.

“Julian Assange exposed these war crimes, and he’s now in a deep dark cell in Belmarsh prison. He is not being treated like a person. He is denied his basic human rights, and the Americans today are making a case to extradite him on espionage charges, over 175-years of prison time, which is a living death sentence. That’s what that is.

“I am here today, to support Julian and to see him a free man under UK jurisdiction, because in this country we do have a tradition of protecting our journalists and the freedom to express themselves and to publish their materials.”

UK governments were so exposed by what Assange had made public that they “want to extradite him either to Sweden or America to get him out of their hair.

“The *Guardian* has taken an editorial line very unsympathetic to Julian, and they have for many years now since the Swedes made their allegations. Obviously they don’t have a case. If Julian was free from the threat of extradition, he’d be free to face those allegations without hesitation and it would be proven if they had evidence.”

Maxine from the Julian Assange Defence Committee said, “We know what we’re up against, and what Julian Assange is up against. They [the Obama and Trump administrations] have spent millions of dollars planning every step of this process, in cahoots with the British government and the Swedish government.

“There is no doubt what they have been planning since 2010, is a speeding way of getting him to the US and burying him.

“It shocks me that he’s in solitary confinement 23 hours a day, that he has no access to his legal team, or ability to prepare his own defence. It is a disaster for him.

“They have done this on purpose. A bail offence does not get you put in Belmarsh prison. It just doesn’t. And the regime that is inflicted on him is the same regime that inflicted on terrorist detainees in Belmarsh in 2002, and it nearly broke them. It broke some of them. That’s what they’ve designed for him.

“We are here to stand for him. He’s asked us, everyone to stand for him, and we’re going to stand for him for as long as it takes. We have to picket every organisation that won’t support him. We must be outside Amnesty. We must be outside the *Guardian*.

Particularly the *Guardian*, who are liars, and frauds, and cheats, and not journalists.

“They did an editorial [calling for Assange to be sent to Sweden] of 476 words last week. It contained a minimum of six lies. That’s one every 80 words. That’s their level of journalism.”



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