

Australian workers and youth defend Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party is winning strong support across Australia for the International Committee of the Fourth International's campaign in defence of imprisoned WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and US whistleblower Chelsea Manning.

Workers, students and youth spoke out in defence of Assange and Manning outside Perth railway station in the Western Australian state capital.

Ramona, a bartender, said: "The US government and all other governments that are involved are clearly trying to twist things around so they can extradite Julian Assange, even though he's in poor health. This is unfair. It won't stop unless people come together.

"These governments are angry because Assange has exposed the truth. If it wasn't the truth they wouldn't be upset about it. It's as simple as that. WikiLeaks has never ever had to retract any information for being incorrect, whereas the reportage by every news publication is questionable."

Simone, a History and English teacher, said: "The persecution of Julian Assange and WikiLeaks is an attempt by the American government to attack freedom of the press. This is very dangerous. WikiLeaks has published information that the government didn't want people to know about."

Referring to the recent federal election, she added, "I knew people who were quite conservative but who voted against the Liberals because of their treatment of Julian Assange."

Tamenna, a student, denounced the attacks on Assange. "The [sexual assault] investigation against him in Sweden was dropped twice, but everyone continues with the derogatory labels and shaming him. This is used to pressure people into not backing him because they fear being accused of supporting a so-called rapist. The presumption of innocence doesn't exist nowadays in the world."

Commenting on the Collateral Murder video, published by WikiLeaks, Tamenna added, "Governments should not be above the law. They must be held accountable."

Joseph, a jazz student, said that Assange was a hero. "The

US government is out to silence people who are trying to do the right thing," he stated.

"Assange makes the US look bad and they don't want to be seen to be bad by anyone else. They try to present Russia and North Korea as the bad guys, but in reality they're all not so good. Honestly I'm appalled by what has happened to Assange. Australia should be stepping up and doing something about it."

Louise, a government worker, commented: "I hate the stigma that whistleblowers get. They see something wrong with what the government's doing, but they're looked upon as snitches. This is terrible and not fair. They're the ones that are trying to tell us what's going on."

Todd, a retail worker, said the persecution of Assange and Manning is "a terrible abuse of our most basic human right to be free. It's fantastic though that Manning is standing up for her own right not to be forced to testify before a grand jury. I think it's very sad that someone is put in jail for expressing their right to not speak.

"I remember when Assange was arrested in early April. It was very interesting that we had our election, but nothing was said about this very prominent Australian and no-one was standing up for his rights. I also thought it was terrible that when Julia Gillard was prime minister, she refused to help Assange at all."

Ian declared, "I admire Julian Assange greatly. He exposed Hillary Clinton and most of the administration for what they really were. There was that vivid footage of the US guys shooting people in Iraq and they were cheering. This is really sick stuff. Assange exposed it and as a result he'll stay in jail for a long time."

Steven, a dancer and dance teacher, stated: "What has been done to Assange is an atrocity. The fight for justice and the fight for the truth is always out there. We always need to fight oppression. Every person has the right to free speech.

"The Australian government has a lot to answer for, not just regarding Assange, but on many issues of human rights and equality, including what they've done and continue to do to Aboriginal people. If I had to vote for somebody to be

prime minister or president of Australia I'd vote Assange."

In Brisbane, the Queensland state capital, **Gulshan**, a student and part-time cleaner, said, "Julian Assange stood up against 'crimes against humanity' and he is now treated as a national enemy. His citizenship is suffering and he is not being provided with proper medical care."

Gulshan denounced the refusal of Australian governments to defend Assange and posed a series of questions.

"Does this mean that the Australian government is allying with the governments of the world to support crimes? Why are the wrongdoers being pampered and looked after, and the defenders of humanity are being tortured? Why are governments of the world defending those who are against people's health and safety and suppressing those who are trying to maintain human health and safety?"

Zameel, an aged care worker, said: "Free Julian Assange. These are the words we should be hearing from some of the leading news publications that are quiet and complicit in the torture and detention of Julian Assange.

"These publications like the *New York Times* and *Der Spiegel* were happy to profit off the heroic acts of public duty undertaken by Chelsea Manning and WikiLeaks. But when a journalist is locked away in solitary and undergoing psychological torture, these corporate news monopolies are doing nothing to protect someone who has risked his life to disclose truths that the powerful sought to hide.

"Support independent media. Organise and mobilise and tell weak men like Mr Peter Greste that without journalists like Mr Assange he would still be languishing in an Egyptian prison. Free Julian Assange and free Chelsea Manning!"

Jenny, a carer and spoken word artist, said: "I've been following WikiLeaks and Julian Assange ever since the Manning leaks exploded back in April 2010. Like millions of others, I watched the Collateral Murder video with horror and disgust.

"These and other criminal revelations were all over the media. Major news organisations around the world published selected leaks like hungry wolves, and over the next four years Julian Assange received 12 awards, ranging from excellence in journalism and bravery to human rights and free speech.

"When Julian sought protection from Ecuador, he was branded as paranoid over his fears that the Swedish allegations were a ploy to get him over to the US via Sweden. Those extradition fears have now been confirmed by British prosecutors opening an extradition case on behalf of the US, and the re-opening of the false Swedish case.

"Now he is in the hospital wing at Belmarsh Prison wasting away with health issues that have been worsening by the day. It's difficult to describe the burning outrage I

feel at how such a courageous and honest person could be treated like something you would see in *Game of Thrones* or *Name of The Rose*.

"The ruling class's response to this principled human being has been to putrefy the airwaves with slanders, lies and barbaric threats. As the danger of war builds, they are no doubt terrified of further leakers who could be triggered by the undoubted atrocities that will be committed if war breaks out between the US and Iran or China or Russia or Venezuela.

"Julian Assange is a test case. If they can destroy him, and they are getting very close to doing exactly that, they can destroy anyone or any organisation that dares to publish the truth about anything incompatible with official secrecy.

"We can't let that happen and must fight to build a mass movement to have them both released and to stop this attack. The WSWS is such a valuable website for understanding what is going on and how to proceed in this time of collapsing capitalism. I'm not sure what we would do without it."

Emmanuel, originally from Ghana and now living in Sydney's western suburbs, declared: "I believe in freedom of speech and think that the Australian government must defend Assange. The government must fight for their citizens wherever they happen to be in the world.

"I'm very disappointed that they have not taken any action to save him. This is not the 'fair go' that they talk about here in Australia. Everybody should get behind the Socialist Equality Party and fight for Julian Assange's release.

"Assange is a genius and a hero and if it wasn't for him, people around the world would not know about government war crimes and other illegal things that they have been doing. He has not committed any crimes. Governments talk about free trade but what about free speech? Why should governments have the right to cover up crimes they commit and control what we can or cannot know?"



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