

# Activist Lauri Love and others speak out in defence of Assange

**Our reporters**  
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Protestors gathered outside Westminster Magistrates Court Friday to support Julian Assange, who faced his third extradition hearing. The lively crowd kept up almost continuous chants of “Hands off Assange!”, “No extradition” and “British justice is no justice”.

Members of the Julian Assange Defence Committee and the Socialist Equality Party were joined by people who had travelled from across London and further afield, including two “Yellow Vest” protestors from France.

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to Lauri Love, who had successfully opposed his own extradition to the United States, charged with breaching government computers and obtaining data illegally.

“I’ve already been through this process. I’ve been through five or six hearings when the USA was trying to kidnap me.

“Everyone said to begin with, there’s no chance you’re going to win, they always get their way. It’s a completely unbalanced extradition treaty, there is no need for the USA to substantiate any evidence, because [then Labour Party Prime Minister] Tony Blair and [Home secretary] David Blunkett signed away that right to George W Bush.

“But we won in the end because of a concerted campaign by supporters and getting coverage in the press.

“Nobody should be a bystander or spectator in such an important case as this. I would encourage everyone to find their power, and reassert their power, attending hearings, writing letters, organising and sharing material online. Find your voice.

“Home Secretary Sajid Javid who signed the extradition warrant should consider that there would be a gross violation of Julian Assange’s human rights if he were sent to America. We wouldn’t send a journalist who reported on war crimes to the country he was reporting on. To send Julian to a country where he would face the rest of his life in prison is wrong.

“One of the principles of justice is that a defendant can

meaningfully participate in their defence, otherwise it’s a sham, it’s a show trial. I don’t think Assange can meaningfully participate in his defence in such a complex case if he is not allowed access to computers, to emails, with only very limited telephone contact permitted, and is in such poor health that he can barely get to a video screen. That is not justice.

“It was horrific enough in my case, and I was at liberty—I could organise and meet my lawyers whenever I wanted. But even then it was physically, emotionally and spiritually awful and I’m still carrying the traces of that trauma. It will be immeasurable worse for Julian. All prisons are horrific, but Belmarsh is on the worst end of the scale.

“Politicians say, ‘It’s for the courts to decide’, that’s their stock phrase. They can wash their hands of it, like Pontius Pilate. And we’re supposed to pretend the judges are impartial. But realistically, all matters of justice are political, and the final say about extradition is a political decision. A politician would put their signature on a piece of paper that would condemn Julian Assange to a lifetime of torture in the USA. That is why we cannot exempt ourselves from the process, it is political. To pretend otherwise is to allow injustice to happen.”

Richard from Wandsworth, London, said he had come down to support Julian Assange because he was “a true hero.”

“He’s done more for society than most other journalists combined. He’s published important documents, backed up by truth and facts. No fabrications, no misinterpretations. That’s why I’ve come out to support Julian Assange.

“I got involved by first looking at WikiLeaks on the Internet. But the first time I came out to protest is when they took him out of the embassy. That motivated me to say enough is enough. It was brutal, and it didn’t have to be like that. Something’s not right, and people have to

stand up, because if we don't, who will?

"A lot of the politicians only look at things in terms of their own career. It's not about truth or justice.

"This is only just the beginning. The more people that hear about it and realise the injustice of this case, the more people will turn up at the protests. People will gather in greater and greater numbers because it is truth that we are defending, not lies and not abuse. And if you can't stand up for truth, what can you stand up for?

"This is not the first time that journalists have been under attack, but this is a new phase. Obama put more whistle-blowers away than anyone. And now Trump is following close behind, so you can see where this is going.

"Look at the censorship on the Internet. They don't want the truth to get out, and they're silencing everyone that speaks the truth.

"Look at the Grenfell situation. There are still hundreds of buildings with unsafe cladding, two years later, on buildings across London and across the country. They're just trying to make more money out of the poor. They're trying to push the poor out of London."

Elsa Collins read out a personal statement to the demonstration, in which she said that people across the world will "take up this fight against this grotesque injustice because the freedom of Julian Assange is our freedom.

"Public officials and legal officials are abusing the system, violating national and international law, showing no regard for human life, no regard for human dignity, no regard for human rights.

"I strongly condemn and denounce the collusion of the US government, UK government, Australian government, Swedish and Ecuadorian governments for waging a brutal war against a single journalist, the greatest journalist of our time, Julian Assange. All he has done is publish truthful information about US and allies war crimes, which the public have a right to know about.

John came from Geneva, Switzerland, where he had organised protests in support of Julian Assange outside the UN building. He wanted to be a part of the movement in Britain and had been following the case for years, "ever since the Collateral Murder video was released. It reveals such appalling behaviour by the American government and its allies in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and all over the world."

An artist and musician, John said he was moving back to Britain so he could support the campaign to free Assange. "People have to stand up, and I hope this

movement grows and grows, and it looks like it is at the moment."

He had met people who did not support Assange because "the dirtying of his name has been so effective. The smear campaign has been so effective that ordinary intelligent normally compassionate people have fallen into the trap and believe all the nonsense that has been printed about him.

"Governments have been using this tactic throughout the whole of history."

The role of Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party was "shocking". John said he didn't want "people like him leading the country. If they can't speak the truth, all the time, then they're not for me."

Coranno is a Yellow Vest protester from Nancy in north-east France, who came to the protest by car with three others from Switzerland. She said, "It's a very dangerous time for democratic freedom, for me, for my children. In France, there is no more freedom for the press anymore. With Macron, it's very, very difficult. For Yellow Vests it's dangerous to go in the street, more so at every protest. In Montpellier, last week you could see a lot of people with blood on their heads."

Antonia said, "I've come down today because it's important to demonstrate for Julian Assange. He needs us at this moment. We need to stand up and protect his rights as a journalist and publisher and remember the war crimes he's exposed."

She added, "I've been involved in the Julian Assange campaign since his arrest." When he was dragged out of the Ecuadorian embassy by the police, "there was a flashback about WikiLeaks and all that he's exposed and I just wanted to know more, and I wanted to know what was going to happen to him."



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