

Public transport workers' meeting Thursday to demand WikiLeaks founder's freedom

London bus drivers show support for Julian Assange

Our reporters
30 July 2019

The global defence campaign launched by the *World Socialist Web Site* to free Julian Assange is gaining support among London bus drivers. A bus workers' meeting this Thursday will discuss the WikiLeaks founder's case and its implications for the democratic rights of the working class.

Socialist Equality Party members and supporters have campaigned for the meeting at Tottenham, Westbourne Park, Cricklewood and Alperton bus depots in recent weeks. Drivers, cleaners, mechanics and office staff have taken copies of the June 20 statement, "For a worldwide campaign to prevent Julian Assange's rendition to the United States!" with dozens stopping to talk with campaigners and register their support.

The 25,000-strong workforce at London Buses is drawn from every corner of the world, including Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Many have first-hand experience of US war crimes and government corruption exposed by WikiLeaks since 2006.

Ali, a driver from Westbourne Park depot said, "Assange is a voice for us. We need to stand up for him because he's one of us. He doesn't stand a chance in the courts, so we need to fight for him and fight for freedom of speech."

Otis, also a driver from Westbourne Park said, "We must stand up for Assange as someone who put himself out there and exposed truths that the governments you see on TV and the powerful people in the background who fund them don't want us to know."

"I read and talk to my colleagues a lot, and I've come to see that the things we're told through the

mainstream media—including what they're saying about Assange—we're told everything for a reason. They have an agenda.

"The media is not about telling the truth and things in the interest of the masses will never be shown. If it was run like that, our government would have a lot of answering to do. Real truth means power and we can see that by what Assange revealed and how they are treating him as a result."

Another driver at Westbourne Park agreed: "The UK government should recognise that the truth is the truth. He should be released immediately. What has happened to Assange could happen to any of us."

At Tottenham depot, **Ana** who is a cleaner said, "We must stand up for Julian Assange. Life is getting harder for workers, especially workers who come from other countries ... we need to defend people like Assange who are anti-war and expose the truth."

Another driver added, "If he goes to America, he'll face the death penalty." He took copies of the statement, commenting, "If people tell the truth [the governments] don't like it."

During a scheduled extradition hearing against Assange on May 30, London bus drivers showed their support for him. Dozens of drivers travelling down Marylebone Road honked their horns and waved to demonstrators outside Westminster Magistrates Court, with their cue soon taken up by truck drivers, cabbies and tradesmen.

The Trump administration, backed by the British, Swedish, Australian and Ecuadorian governments, is seeking to extradite Assange to the US on trumped-up

Espionage Act charges that carry a 175-year prison term. “Assange is a class war prisoner,” the SEP explained in a leaflet distributed among bus workers for this week’s meeting. “He has been hunted down and persecuted for exposing war crimes, including the US military’s slaughter of one million innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

The leaflet indicted the Labour Party for its complicity in Assange’s planned extradition, “Labour and the unions have done nothing to help Assange. As always, they are focusing their energies on suppressing opposition to the employers and the Tories. Above all they are working to prevent any discussion of the escalating war drive against Iran that will have untold consequences.”

The campaign that has begun at the London bus depots links the fight for Assange’s freedom to the defence of the social and democratic rights of the working class. Thursday’s meeting will discuss the US-led vendetta against Assange and its connection to the rightward lurch by all the imperialist powers towards war and authoritarian rule. A report and discussion will also take place on the conditions facing London bus workers and the need for rank-and-file committees independent of the unions. All London bus drivers, mechanics, cleaners and other workers are urged to attend.

Meeting details:

Thursday August 1, 6.30 p.m.
Railway Club
327 Edgware Road
Cricklewood
London, NW2 6JP



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact