

Build a mass movement to free class-war prisoners Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning

SEP (Sri Lanka) presidential candidate Pani Wijesiriwardena
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The following statement was issued by Pani Wijesiriwardena, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate in Sri Lanka's forthcoming presidential elections. Wijesiriwardena is the only candidate calling for the immediate release of Assange and Manning.

I appeal to all workers throughout South Asia and the rest of the world to join the struggle to build a mass movement to secure the release of jailed WikiLeaks founder and publisher Julian Assange and whistleblower Chelsea Manning.

Assange is being persecuted because he dared to reveal US war crimes, including the indiscriminate killings of civilians and journalists in Iraq, and the illegal activities of other imperialist powers. Former US Army soldier Chelsea Manning, who provided WikiLeaks with tens of thousands of documents, is languishing in a US prison because she has refused to testify before a secret grand jury against Assange.

These courageous individuals have not committed any crime. They have been jailed and are being subjected brutal treatment because the US and its imperialist allies want to intimidate and silence all honest journalists and fighters for the truth.

The incarceration of Assange and Manning is a direct assault on free speech and the democratic rights of working people in every country. When the imperialist powers are threatened, they quickly dispense with the "rule of law" and "natural justice" and the dictatorial reality of capitalist rule becomes glaringly visible.

The treatment of Julian Assange, who is being held in near solitary confinement in the UK's Belmarsh Prison, amounts to physical and psychological torture. United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer and Assange's father John Shipton have warned that the

WikiLeaks founder may die if he remains in the maximum-security jail. British judicial authorities have subjected Assange to kangaroo court-style procedures in the lead up to an extradition trial next February. The US Justice Department has concocted 18 charges against Assange, including 17 for espionage, and if found guilty by American courts he faces 175 years jail or worse.

The persecution of Assange and Manning and the associated attacks on freedom of speech are driven by US imperialism's preparations for war. Capitalist governments everywhere are seeking to suppress the growing movement of the working class and the oppressed people everywhere against austerity through media censorship, intimidation and direct repression.

The eruption of mass protests in Chile, Lebanon and beyond, along with ongoing strikes by Telengana transport workers and Motherson workers in India, as well as industrial action over the past year in Sri Lanka involving railway workers, teachers, non-academic university employees, point to the determination of workers to defend their social conditions and challenge the powers-that-be.

Industrial and political action by Sri Lankan workers will develop with even more vigor and determination, irrespective of whichever capitalist presidential candidate power in the Sri Lankan presidential election.

I urge workers, students and youth everywhere to defend Assange and Manning. The imprisonment of these courageous individuals is an attack on the democratic rights of every worker. This assault must be answered and defeated through the building of independent rank-and-file committees in factories and workplaces and the struggle for an international mass

movement to demand the immediate and unconditional release of Assange and Manning.



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