

# Brisbane forum calls for broad support for Assange and Manning

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After a lively discussion, a Socialist Equality Party forum in Brisbane last Saturday passed a resolution urging the intensification of the campaign to free WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange, and whistleblower Chelsea Manning.

The forum and the resolution focussed on the need to take the defence of Assange and Manning out to the broadest layers of the working class, as well as to call for the involvement of all principled defenders of democratic rights.

An amendment was moved and carried to add a specific call for the media, that is, journalists, to report the truth about the persecution of Assange, a journalist, and Manning, both incarcerated for exposing the criminal actions of the US government and its allies around the globe. The resolution, as amended, stated:

This forum resolves to help intensify the campaign to defend Julian Assange, the WikiLeaks founder and journalist, and the courageous whistleblower, Chelsea Manning, who have told the world the truth about US-led war crimes, coup plots, corporate abuses and mass surveillance.

We support the call issued by the *World Socialist Web Site*: The fight to defend Assange, whose persecution is the spearhead of an international drive to authoritarianism, must be global in scope. It requires the mobilisation of principled defenders of democratic rights, including journalists, doctors, artists and intellectuals.

Above all, the campaign must be based on the international working class, the overwhelming majority of the population and the most

powerful social force, whose interests are inseparable from the most determined offensive to defend all social and democratic rights. Only through the activation of the mass support for Assange will the authorities in Britain and Australia be forced to uphold his democratic rights, block the US extradition and grant his freedom.

It is crucial that this fight be intensified in the lead-up to Assange's extradition trial in February. We appeal to all workers and defenders of democratic rights to:

- Hold meetings in your workplace, college, university or school to discuss the imminent threat to Assange's life and the dangers this poses to the democratic rights of the entire working class.
- Pass resolutions demanding his immediate freedom and the blocking of his extradition to the US.
- Organise delegations for the global demonstrations that have been called in February. Make a special appeal to those sections of workers now in struggle, including rail and postal workers in the UK, autoworkers in the US, Germany and elsewhere, and the millions of others entering into class battles internationally.
- Appeal to the media to report the truth about Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange and the reasons behind their incarceration.

After the forum, one of the participants, **Alyssa**, spoke to the WSWs about why she had become so determined to free Assange and Manning. "I've been

following Julian since I was much younger living in Melbourne and about two months ago I was told that he was in prison, so I decided to look on-line and see what was happening,” she explained.

“And the more I read, the more I want to get involved, because I am that disgusted in the behaviour of the United States and the UK, and even the Australian government. To tell you the truth, I have never really wanted to be involved in anything this much before. That’s how much I believe in it. So, I’m in it for the long haul.”

Asked if she thought this reflected broader sentiments, Alyssa replied:

“I think at the base of it is basic values, and that’s why the teenagers who are here today can grasp it so quickly. Because it’s basic values that are being ignored by these governments; basic rights. I keep thinking about all the things I teach my children, like about respecting each other, having compassion, mercy and dignity, and all the normal things that you teach children. These basic values and morals don’t seem to be there in the governments.”

When asked why she thought this was the case, Alyssa commented:

“There are definitely material interests involved in this. Especially with the United States. Its governments seem to want to invade anyone and everywhere for all sorts of reasons, but never good enough reasons. A lot of wars are started for resources, for example. That’s not a good enough reason.”

Speaking about what needed to be done, Alyssa said:

“For a start, the media has a lot to answer for. They should be informing the public about everything that has been going on with Julian Assange and the persecution of people who work in the media around the world. They should be informing the public about the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan and other wars and torture that’s been going on around the world, because the public should know so that they can push for change. Otherwise, it just keeps happening.”

Speaking about the resolution passed by the forum, Alyssa commented: “Definitely we need to tell the public what’s going on, so that they back us on this... Half the problem is that the media is owned by the same forces that are doing this to Assange. If you look back to what happened with Hitler, he too wanted to get rid of anyone who was intelligent or he saw as a threat

to his position, and he used fake news to support what he did and hide a lot of what he was doing, and to keep the public misinformed.”



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