

The WSWS and the fight to free political prisoners

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The WSWS is beginning to publish the speeches delivered by leading members of the ICFI and contributors to the WSWS at the online rally held October 25 to welcome the relaunching of the WSWS that began with the postings of October 2, 2020. The remarks below were given by Oscar Grenfell, a member of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) national committee.

The relaunch of the WSWS is a major advance in the struggle to unify the working class internationally. This site will politically educate workers and young people around the world and mobilise them in the fight to end capitalism amid its deepest crisis since the 1930s.

The ruling elites are responding to growing working class opposition with the blunt instruments of repression. The past year has witnessed brutal attacks on rallies against police violence internationally; snatch squads grabbing demonstrators off the streets of Portland and other American cities; a bloody crackdown on protesters in Nigeria, and a turn to authoritarianism from India, to Brazil and the United States.

In this situation, the WSWS plays the decisive role in the fight against state attacks, frame-ups and in the struggle to free political prisoners.

The *World Socialist Web Site* is the “tribune of the people,” described by the great Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin some one hundred years ago. It responds, to use Lenin’s words, to “*Any and every manifestation of police tyranny and autocratic outrage.*” It spearheads the defence of journalists, publishers, political dissidents and workers who come under attack.

This is what the WSWS has done in the fight to free WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange. For the past decade, we have refuted all the lies peddled by the

intelligence agencies, the corporate media and the pseudo-left, to undermine support for Assange.

He sits in a London jail cell as we meet now, and faces life in a US supermax prison. His offense was exposing the war crimes, coups and sordid intrigues of the imperialist powers.

The defence of Assange, and courageous whistleblowers like Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden, depends on the mobilisation of the working class. The fight for democratic rights can only go forward in a struggle against capitalism and the ruling class plans for dictatorship.

The attempt to prosecute Assange is not only an assault on press freedom. Its purpose is to intimidate the emerging movement of the working class, and create a precedent for far broader victimisations.

These dangers have already been revealed in the plight of 13 workers’ leaders from the Maruti Suzuki car plant in Manesar, India. They have been imprisoned in tortuous conditions since 2012.

The workers had led a fight against the poverty wages, sweatshop conditions and precarious contracts in the Indian auto industry. They were then framed by the company, the state and national governments and the courts, for a fire at their facility in 2012. Initially facing the death sentence, they now confront spending the rest of their lives in prison, for the “crime” of fighting for the interests of the working class.

Despite the different circumstances, there are clear parallels between the case of Assange and the Maruti Suzuki workers. Both have been subjected to a torrent of lies and slanders by the authorities and the corporate press. Both have been abandoned by the trade unions, the official political parties and the pseudo-left. And it is the WSWS that has taken a lead in the fight to free Assange, and the Maruti Suzuki workers, as part of our

struggle to mobilise the working class.

The relaunch of the WSWS creates the conditions for these struggles to be expanded.

The WSWS brings forward the entire heritage of the socialist movement, including its great struggles in defence of political prisoners. This includes the Dreyfus case in France at the turn of the 20th century, the fight against the frame-up of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1920s America, and the struggle to defend our Sri Lankan comrades against attacks by the military and government. We call on everyone watching today to join us in this fight for democratic rights and socialism.



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