

Australian educators call for the defence of COVID-19 whistleblower Rebekah Jones

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Members of the Committee for Education (CFPE) in Australia are winning support from teachers and other education workers for the defence of US COVID-19 whistleblower Rebekah Jones.

Jones, a data scientist, has for months been exposing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Florida and K-12 schools across the United States, by establishing the COVID Monitor, a comprehensive database for tracking infections. Based on scientific evidence, she has consistently warned of the deadly consequences of reopening schools in the midst of the pandemic.

Jones was fired in May by the Florida Department of Health for refusing to manipulate data to support the state and US governments' escalating back-to-work and back-to-school campaigns.

Earlier this month, Jones' house was violently raided by Florida state police, with guns aimed at her and her family. The police seized her phone, computer and several hard drives, seeking to prevent her from continuing to publish data on COVID-19 outbreaks.

This blatant attack on basic democratic rights and freedom of speech is not widely known among teachers and education support staff in Australia. There has been no coverage of it in the corporate media, and silence from the teacher unions and the pseudo-left organisations.

Last week, teachers and support staff at Footscray High in Melbourne met in the final days of the school year to show their support for Jones. They unanimously passed the following resolution:

Footscray High School teachers and Education Support Staff condemn the police raid on the home of data scientist Rebekah Jones, which came in response to her work

exposing the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in Florida and in schools across the US. The raid is a brazen attack on the right to free speech and access to information. Educators internationally must come to the defence of Jones and all whistleblowers fighting for full transparency and reporting of all data on COVID-19.

Educators at Footscray High have a consistent and principled record of opposing the criminal persecution of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, passing resolutions demanding his freedom and supporting the campaign by CFPE members for his defence.

Daniel, an education support worker at Footscray High, drew the connection between the heroic fight of Assange and other whistleblowers such as Jones.

"The reason they are attacking Jones is to intimidate her and anyone like her not to release information. There is a similarity in what she is doing with what Julian Assange did. They are both releasing information that governments don't want to hear. Governments are afraid that this information will be used to begin struggles.

"Rebekah Jones was fired for refusing to doctor information and she launched her own website COVID Monitor and for that she had to be shut down with guns drawn by the police.

"In the US if it's clear that it's unsafe to work and if people know that there might be a strike, profits will suffer. The opposition to the return to work will save lives and people need information, so Rebekah Jones should be supported."

Susan, a primary school teacher in Melbourne, stated her agreement with the defence of Jones. "This whole situation is so appalling," she commented. "I

can't say that I am surprised any more though.

"I believe the police raided her home because they don't want the working class to know the true magnitude of the pandemic. If educators did, the capitalist system could not run because no one would send their kids to school and this would affect workers getting to work.

"The armed police were a message to anyone standing up for workers. It is no different from the persecution of Julian Assange, who too exposed the truth. It is imperative that we support Rebekah Jones and others like her to expose the truth and to ensure that the reckless policies of the elite are exposed. It's a scary world that we are living in right now and the assault on telling the truth and falsifying data is really telling."

David, a secondary teacher in rural New South Wales, wrote: "It is with great sincerity that I state my support in defence of Rebekah Jones. Like Assange and Edward Snowden, she is being persecuted for exposing the criminal actions of the ruling elite.

"By revealing the extent of COVID-19 cases in schools, the narrative that children are immune to the virus has been dissolved. Governments across the globe have used this argument to justify the forced reopening of schools in order to send parents back to work and minimise the financial damage caused by the pandemic.

"By exposing the lies of the US government, Rebekah's house was raided, her children threatened, and her computers seized. This raid shows the readiness of the government to use the police to silence its political opponents, that is, anyone who has the courage to speak publicly against their criminal behaviour.

"We need to support Rebekah and other courageous whistleblowers by standing with them, spreading their message widely, and by refusing to be intimidated by these fascistic displays of police power."

Martin, a retired teacher, condemned the police raid on Jones, describing it as "violent" and "outrageous." He commented: "This was an obvious attempt to terrify her. I saw a TV clip of the governor of Florida who was apparently outraged that his police were being likened to the Gestapo. Well, in fact, that is exactly what they are. The label fits.

"Her courage in taking on this task of exposing the COVID cover up is fantastic, and must be very popular in the US. The entire world is looking at the US in

horror, and condemning both major political parties, for allowing the virus to rip through the population. The confiscation of her property on a bogus pretext must be denounced, and the immediate return of her property must be demanded. I am worried that they will permanently damage her work.

"Jones is an inspiration who has restored faith in ethical, principled science. I support her and denounce the authorities and police."

The WSWS is publishing statements of support for data scientist and COVID-19 whistleblower Rebekah Jones, whose Florida home was raided in response to her efforts to expose the spread of the pandemic in Florida and in K-12 schools across the United States. We urge our readers to send statements of support for Jones today.



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