

Australian SEP supporters: “The only force that can free Assange is the international working class”

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is today publishing further comments from WSWS readers and supporters of the fight to free WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

Many of those calling for Assange’s immediate release attended an emergency meeting called by the SEP on December 23 in response to the December 10 ruling by the UK High Court, which ordered Assange’s extradition to the US. The online meeting was attended by people from at least 26 countries.

Speakers at the meeting urged defenders of Assange to orient themselves to the international working class, not the very forces responsible for Assange’s plight, such as those in the British and Australian political establishments.

They also drew the connection between the fight for the truth conducted by WikiLeaks to expose the war crimes and abuses of the US and its allies, and the campaign being waged by the SEP and the WSWS against the lies and misinformation used by capitalist governments around the world to justify their profit-driven COVID-19 pandemic policies.

Dmitri, a 23-year-old writer in Adelaide, said: “The UK High Court decision is a very transparent abuse of power to use trumped-up charges to try and punish whistleblowing or any sharing of information about things which should be public knowledge anyway.

“We should be allowed to know what the military and our governments are doing. They’re doing it not just to punish Assange, but also to make an example of him—to show anyone if they try to do something like expose war crimes or even have a database for sharing those things, this is what they’ll do.

“Assange’s health has been suffering. They want to do this to him just as we’re on the precipice of calling for war against China or Russia, to make a political

statement.”

On the response of the Labor Party, the Greens, and the pseudo-left, Dmitri said: “They might give different reasons, but it seems like they’re all opposed to a genuine response to the war machine and imperialism. These parties are based on the upper middle-class layers who are not opposed to war because they actually benefit from them.”

Liam, a mechanic from western Sydney, commented: “The recent call [for Assange not to be extradited] by Australian Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce only reveals that there is serious concern in the broader public about Assange and all his case represents, and that Joyce’s sudden concern is a way for him to harness this public support.

But ultimately, it’s just going to lead the movement into a dead end, because Australia and its political class are beholden to US interests. That’s all Joyce’s comments show and that’s why I think the work by the *Don’t Extradite Assange Group*, in appealing to a political system that is trying to destroy Assange and opposition to war, is ultimately futile.”

Matt, a carpenter from the New South Wales South Coast, said: “As the pivot to Asia escalates, the ruling elite can’t tolerate a rebellious working class in Australia, Britain or the United States. They are worried that an intelligent and belligerent population will stop their war machine. They have learned the lessons from the Vietnam War, and the very powerful images the American public witnessed on live TV, images of Viet Cong soldiers getting shot in the head. They want to pacify and dull the consciousness of the workers and to do that they’ve got to step on people like Julian Assange.

“Right-wing populist figures, like Ron Paul in America or Barnaby Joyce in Australia, allow the bourgeoisie to

tout that you can work within the system, but that is directly contradicted by Joyce's preposterous comment that he can't do anything [to defend Assange.]

"The Labor Party, through the unions, could have hundreds of thousands of people on the street tomorrow if they really wanted to, and they're doing nothing. What needs to happen is not just protest politics, people on the streets, but that would be a significant start. There needs to be a great flowering of consciousness. Workers do need to read the *World Socialist Web Site*, that is part of the answer. It's definitely been a big part of developing my consciousness. We owe it to Assange to keep him alive."

Damien, a printing worker and long-time SEP supporter in Brisbane, commented: "Julian Assange and WikiLeaks, with the aid of courageous whistleblowers like Chelsea Manning, waged their own information war, most memorably with the release in 2010 of the sickening 'Collateral Murder' video. They laid bare the crimes of US imperialism and its allies. It is therefore no surprise that Assange would be targeted by those same powers. Indeed, it is a credit to Assange's courage and principles that he did not allow that danger to deter him.

"Appeals to capitalist governments and their judiciaries have fallen on deaf ears. As we have seen most recently in the changes to Australia's electoral registration laws, capitalism is increasingly abandoning any pretence of upholding democratic rights. The 'living with COVID-19' policy demonstrates that the capitalist state has as much respect for its citizens' lives as it has for those abroad on whom it wages war. Is it any surprise that the capitalist class views someone like Assange as a dangerous enemy?

"The only force that can free Assange is the international working class. For that reason, I fully support the call for the formation of rank-and-file committees and a program of demands that includes the freeing of Julian Assange. His future is tied to the struggle to build the International Committee of the Fourth International in every country, overthrow capitalism and establish a global socialist society."

Mitchell, an IT worker and new SEP electoral member in Brisbane, said: "Having had its pride hurt by a journalist of the highest honour, the mainstream media was front and centre in demanding revenge against Assange, none more so than the 'reputable' *Guardian*—the paper of 'Russiagate'—which profited off a hatchet job of a book against Assange, then degraded him with smear after smear.

"Organisations like PEN America and the Committee to

Protect Journalists—the latter of which has left Assange off their Jailed Journalists Index for three years in a row—also refused to take a stand, as did 'respectable' journalists like Peter Greste and Maria Ressa, who respectively preached 'responsible journalism' and 'protecting national security' even as Julian was being thrown to the wolves.

"And then, of course, no one has proven as perfidious as the pseudo-left parties in Australia and the UK, especially Britain's Labour under Jeremy Corbyn, who maintained a deafening silence on Assange's plight during his entire tenure as party leader, allowed himself to be destroyed by completely false allegations levelled against him by the party's Blairites. He now has the audacity to claim Assange's freedom is the cause of our time—a travesty that should shatter any remaining illusions that Labour will bring fundamental change to British workers.

"In sharp contrast, the SEP has defended both Julian Assange and WikiLeaks from the very beginning for their indispensable contributions to the struggle against imperialism, and is now better positioned than any other political force to spearhead the final drive to prevent Julian's extradition to the United States—a drive whose success depends on mobilising the extraordinary might of the international working class."

Peter, an ex-BHP steelworker, said: "Julian Assange is the living embodiment of honest and courageous journalism. His relentless and sadistic persecution has only been possible by the silence or active collusion of organisations and governments who once claimed to in some way oppose the excesses of capitalism.

"It's no accident that it was Labor and Democratic administrations at the helm of government that led the campaign to silence Assange. Appeals to the forces who jailed Assange and kept the witch-hunt alive ignores the factual history of this case and places the fate of Assange and the truth in the hands of those very forces that sacrifice both. Truth is a class issue and only the intervention of the working class and the oppressed can assure Assange's freedom."



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