

# Rap artist M.I.A. defends Julian Assange and denounces Tony Blair as a war criminal

Kevin Reed  
24 June 2022

On June 17, British rapper, singer and political activist M.I.A. posted several tweets defending Julian Assange and denouncing the decision of UK Home Secretary Priti Patel to approve his extradition to the US to face charges under the Espionage Act of 1917.

In her first message, M.I.A. wrote, “They invite the war criminal like Tony Blair to speak at Davos about ethics and religion then lock up the journalist who helped defend truth and innocent civilians in solitary confinement. Gross.”

In another tweet, she posted, “In this entire world not a single war criminal has been questioned for killing 1 million people in Iraq for no reason. Yet 1 man has been blamed and in prison for 10 years for showing a 10minute video about it.”

With more than 625,000 followers on Twitter, M.I.A.’s tweets reached a wide audience and the second of them received 65,000 likes and 17,000 retweets. The response to M.I.A.’s messages reflects broad public support for Julian Assange despite the universal lineup of every capitalist government in the world against him.

Her mention of a “10 minute video” is a reference to the April 5, 2010 publication by WikiLeaks of the infamous *Collateral Murder video*, a classified US military video depicting the indiscriminate murder of over a dozen people in a suburban Baghdad, including two Reuters news staff, in July 2007.

It was the publication of this leaked video by WikiLeaks, as well as other classified documents and information that became known as the Afghan War Logs and Iraq War Logs, that revealed to the world the criminal nature of the aggressive wars being fought by US imperialism and its allies in the Middle East in the aftermath of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001.

Born as Mathangi “Maya” Arulpragasam to parents

from Sri Lanka in London, M.I.A. is a 46-year-old artist known internationally for her songs that comment on political issues such as immigration and war. While she was an infant, her family moved to the northern Sri Lankan city of Jaffna where Maya spent most of her childhood before returning to London in 1986.

M.I.A. adopted her stage name—an initialism for Missing In Action—around 2001 in honor of her cousin who went missing in Sri Lanka. As she wrote in 2012, “We were the same age, went to the same schools growing up. I was also living in Acton at the time. So I was living in Acton looking for my cousin missing in action.”

M.I.A. has consistently supported Julian Assange and WikiLeaks going back to 2012. She has said that WikiLeaks was the only source of reliable news and information about the events unfolding in Sri Lanka. She stood by Assange’s side as he held a press conference at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London when he was successfully granted political asylum by Ecuador in August 2012.

In 2019, she gave an interview to the WSWWS after she visited with Julian Assange in Belmarsh prison and following a press conference that was boycotted by the corporate news media and the BBC. At that time she said, “The basic bottom line is he’s in there because he exposed some war crimes and he just campaigned for peace. ... I support Julian because I think someone like this is valuable to society because of his knowledge about so many different things.”

One would think that a Grammy-nominated international music artist making public statements in defending Julian Assange and WikiLeaks and denouncing former British Prime Minister Tony Blair as a “war criminal” would attract media attention.

As Labour Party Prime Minister of the UK from 1997

to 2007, Blair of oversaw Britain's participation in the 2003 invasion of Iraq on the basis of lies concocted by the intelligence agencies of US imperialism that the regime of Saddam Hussein possessed "weapons of mass destruction."

To date, however, not a single corporate news outlet—including the music and entertainment press—has reported M.I.A.'s statements denouncing the UK's plans to render Assange into the custody of US imperialism on the grounds that it would not be "oppressive, unjust or an abuse of process to extradite Mr. Assange."

The silence of the corporate media on M.I.A.'s comments come as no surprise, given that the UK Home Secretary's decision to approve Assange's extradition order was barely reported and there were no editorial objections to it. It is a measure of the subordination of the capitalist press to the needs of US imperialism.

Other than the statements of protest from M.I.A., journalist and filmmaker John Pilger and rock musician Roger Waters, very few artists have spoken out publicly against the travesty of justice being meted out against Julian Assange as punishment for his publication of the truth on WikiLeaks.

As the WSWS reported on Thursday, following the announcement last week that the UK government had approved his extradition, Assange was stripped naked and placed in a bare cell at London's maximum security Belmarsh Prison. Julian's wife Stella Morris also reported that he had been denied visitors for the entire week since the announcement. The aim of the UK government, as it cooperates with the US Justice Department of Democratic Party President Joe Biden, is to intensify the suffering of Julian Assange as much as possible.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**