

# Australian workers and youth speak out: “If there was democracy Assange would never have gone to jail”

**Our reporters**  
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On July 10, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Australia held a well-attended online meeting demanding freedom for WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange. The meeting was called after British Home Secretary Priti Patel announced that she had approved Assange’s extradition to the US, where he faces life imprisonment for exposing American war crimes, pending a final possible legal appeal.

The speakers, SEP (Australia) National Secretary Cheryl Crisp, WSWs writer Oscar Grenfell and Eric London, a leading member of the SEP in the US, indicted all the governments involved in Assange’s decade-long persecution. They placed the attacks against him in the context of the new wars against Russia and China being hatched by the US and its allies and the deepening crisis of global capitalism.

Each explained that Assange’s liberty requires the development of a movement of the working class as the only constituency that defends democratic rights and can end imperialist war. In that context, the meeting, attended by more than 200 people, passed the following resolution:

“This meeting condemns the persecution of Julian Assange by the American, British, Australian and Swedish governments for exposing the war crimes of the US and its allies. We demand that the Australian government end its collaboration with the legal travesty to railroad Assange into the US courts and instead use all its diplomatic and other powers to secure his immediate and unconditional release.”

The meeting can be watched in full here.

Several attendees spoke to the WSWs.

Josh, a Masters student in Melbourne, raised the broader situation within which Assange is under attack: “Facing the immense global problems of our current age necessitates a coordinated global response,” he said.

“These global problems are the result of strong capitalist and imperialist institutional structures that have pillaged global resources at the expense of working people, indigenous sovereignty, and future generations.

“Socialist Equality pursues the mechanisms to fight these problems and it cannot be achieved without the radical journalism of organisations such as WikiLeaks. The persecution of Julian Assange is a threat against all journalists and the future of proper investigative journalism.

“Assange has received minimal support relative to other journalists who have been imprisoned abroad. His treatment over the last 12 years speaks volumes to the ongoing capitulation of these Western powers to the imperialist USA agenda. Assange’s work with Wikileaks exposed a plethora of systemic war crimes committed by the USA and its allies.

“The conversation of whether Assange and his team at Wikileaks followed ‘proper’ journalistic protocols purposefully deflects from the content that was contained within. The entire process is planned inertia and supportive of the western war industrial complex and USA-focused geopolitical aims.

“Wikileaks’ reports on these global atrocities were a watershed moment. These reports have changed the world, emboldened people to come together and oppose injustice and question power and our place in it. Our support of Julian Assange is also a means of supporting those journalists of the future, to give them the knowledge and security that their work critiquing powerful institutions holds real material value in creating a better world for all. “

Neil, the former owner of a transport and car repair business in Melbourne, attended his first SEP meeting.

He explained: ‘If people found out the truth then the war

in Ukraine could have been avoided altogether, but America wants to fight Russia. If Ukraine joins NATO you can kiss Russia goodbye. Now they have the Swiss on the other side, plus Ukraine would make Russia pretty much surrounded.

'What if Russia goes to Cuba and puts nuclear weapons there? The US wouldn't be happy, but that's what the US is doing to Russia. Not saying Putin is a nice guy but the US doesn't want this war to stop. They see him and China as a threat. The US government love the Ukrainians? I don't believe that, they don't love anyone except themselves.

'America is spending trillions on war, yet their people are homeless in their own country. The war in Ukraine was all America's fault, but who is suffering? The Ukrainians and Russians. America aren't putting troops there but they are giving them weapons and making money from it.

'Labor and Liberal are the same, I used to believe in Labor more but now I don't believe in them whatsoever because they both just follow America's footsteps.

'Assange exposed a lot of governments, and it's not just America who is worried about him, so is England, and Australia. That's why they are keeping him in, because if he's out he will keep exposing. The mainstream media, including the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, is hiding a lot; they only tell us what they want to.

'Democracy has gone out the door. If there was democracy Assange would never have gone to jail. England is killing him slowly.'

Rosie, a health worker from rural Western Australia, stated: 'I've always felt that Edward Snowden and Julian Assange were scapegoats. To prevent the populace from having a certain idea of what things are really like, they have to shut these people up.

'I think the way forward is about trying to find justice for Julian, who told the truth even when nobody could hear what the real truth is.

'The things that he has printed and laid out in Wikileaks, I think we have a right to know, by the way.

'The picture I'm getting is that whichever side get into power, they have been trying to condemn Julian Assange. Why even now, look at Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. Oh sure, Labor got in. But Albanese is doing the same thing as the former Liberal government. He's going, 'Oh well, you know we're just going to wash our hands of it.' I'm thinking, 'Assange is an Australian citizen, what are you doing?'"

Christopher, who works in Road Traffic Management in

Melbourne, said: "It was a privilege to attend the meeting you held. Way back when Julian Assange first started up WikiLeaks, the fact that he was trying to raise awareness of what is going on in the world: wars, corruption, drew me to support him. If people don't stand up against tyranny they could be seen to be supporting it. The US has been embarrassed by the war crimes that he exposed. They don't want their dirty laundry aired.

"This is an attack on Julian Assange but it's also an attack on free speech. The US has refused to sign the Geneva Convention which would make it liable to be prosecuted for war crimes. The attack on Assange is being used as a warning against any journalist, including future journalists, to be careful as to what they bring to the attention of the general public. I am disappointed at the almost deafening silence of fellow journalists and governments, including the Australian government, over Assange's persecution."

Speakers had outlined the recent attack on Dr David Berger by the Australia Health Practitioners Regulatory Authority. Berger has been censured, instructed that he must undertake a special "education program" and threatened with deregistration.

These attacks have been levelled because the widely-respected doctor has condemned the "let it rip" COVID policies of Australian governments and championed the scientifically-based policies required to eliminate transmission and end the pandemic.

Christopher said: "In the meeting, when the topic turned to Dr Berger, I did for a minute think, where is this headed, are we going off track? Are we here to discuss Assange or COVID? But I stuck with it and then it became very apparent, very clear the connection between silencing Assange and the silencing of Dr Berger. Information is power. There does need to be a campaign of information."



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