

Attendees at Sydney protest defending Assange speak out

Our reporters
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Around 800 people participated in a protest in Sydney yesterday demanding the freedom of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange. The protest was addressed by Stella Assange, Julian's wife, along with his father and brother.

Speakers demanded that the Australian government intervene to secure Assange's release as a persecuted citizen. They noted the importance of ordinary people mobilising in defence of the WikiLeaks founder.

The WSWs spoke to several participants. Donna and Akasha traveled two hours from the New South Wales Central Coast to attend. It was the first protest they had ever participated in.

Donna said: "Julian Assange first came to my notice through the *Ithaka* documentary, and I was utterly appalled. I have been following him for some years. I came to the rally because I couldn't just sit back and not come to fight something that is bigger than yourself.

"I didn't know much about Assange before that. You don't get a lot from our press. If the media had got behind Assange—considering they are all journalists—then more people would know the severity of what's going on. I think the media wants to ingratiate itself with the US and it's all dictated by the relationship the Australian government has with the US government."

Akasha added: "The Australian government will do nothing to defend Assange because they don't want to offend the US. I can't understand why this violation of the freedom of the press. We are all meant to know. We need people like Julian, so we know what's really going on in the world. Biden is trying to get a US journalist out of Russia, and he said, 'Journalism is not a crime,' so why hasn't Julian been released?"

Donna said: "They're trying to censor people who

speak out. They're saying, 'If you speak up this will happen to you.' But we need to know what's going on. We have a right to know."

Referring to Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Donna stated: "He breaks promises. He has broken election promises about fixing the cost of living. Rent has gone through the roof. He promised to lower electricity prices. All the things he promised to get elected, he hasn't done. He doesn't have the best interests of the people at heart. Albanese has put Australian people in the front line of a nuclear war with China. It is causing a lot of anxiety, the thought that we are in the firing line when World War III starts."

Wayne, a gardener, said: "I am here to show my support for Julian. All he did was tell the truth. He should be set free. You've got to uphold the principle of free speech. Both political parties are the same, they serve the same corporate masters. It's the same in New Zealand—the Labor and National parties—nothing really changes. No politician has the guts to stand up and demand Assange's freedom.

"The mainstream media is so biased. You have to find the truth on the internet. There are only a few places left where you can get the truth. You won't find out what's going on by relying on the MSM.

"I don't think the Albanese government will do anything to help Assange. We don't live in a real democracy. The system just serves the elite. To be honest, I think we need a revolution, nothing short of a revolution. The current system does not serve the interests of the majority of the people. People like Assange just become victims.

"I think the governments of the US and Australia are planning bigger wars. There has been no effort to find a peaceful solution to the war in Ukraine. There's money in war and that's the bottom line. Just endless wars

going on. Afghanistan has been a total disaster. The billions and billions of dollars it cost, and the country has just gone back to the way it was. The twenty years of violence resulted in no change at all. They shouldn't be providing weapons in the Ukraine war. It would have been all over ages ago."

Hardy said: "The government is setting us up for war against Russia and China and the media is carrying the government's line. The language they use against people who question the necessity of going to war is terrible. And the way they describe people who are contrary minded to their pro-war ideas is such a shame. We don't have a free press. The idea that we have stepped up to these nuclear submarines and now it's okay to be heading for nuclear warfare. No way!

"The media hasn't done anything to contribute to a balanced conversation. I might not agree with everything Julian Assange says, but I want to see the conversation. Albanese or Dutton both spout the same line. The fact that Albanese was allowed to take the oath of office and rush over to the AUKUS meeting before the election tally was even completed, shows the governor-general is also complicit. I think it stinks. I have no faith that the current Labor incarnation has the interests of the working class at heart."



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