

UK postal workers demand freedom for Julian Assange

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Our correspondent
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Postal workers in Britain have spoken with the *World Socialist Web Site* about the necessity for a mass campaign in the working class in defence of heroic journalist and publisher Julian Assange.

The Wikileaks founder faces imminent extradition by the UK to the United States to stand trial under the Espionage Act for exposing the war crimes of the major powers in Afghanistan and Iraq, the attack on democratic rights and spying by intelligence agencies and the backing of ruthless dictatorships around the world.

In a High Court hearing Tuesday and Wednesday, Assange is seeking leave to appeal an order for his extradition. If this is denied, he will have exhausted all legal avenues in the British courts to challenge his extradition and can be rendered to the US.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) has appealed for resolutions to be passed in workplaces and for messages of support for Julian Assange demanding an end to the extradition proceedings against him and his immediate and unconditional freedom.

Members of the PWRFC have made their own appeals for their colleagues to come out strongly in defence of Assange.

Ian is a postal worker in north-west England:

“What Julian Assange and Wikileaks has exposed is how governments have been withholding the truth, entering illegal wars and misleading people; that is why he must be set free.

“I remember the impact of the “Collateral Murder” video of the US helicopter mowing down civilians and journalists. I’d already taken part in the protests against the Iraq war in 2003. It confirmed and validated the opposition to the illegal wars and all the lies. What was

brought home was the reality of the crimes against innocent civilians.

“This made the truth available online via the internet, including in remote and poorer countries in the world. Wikileaks’ exposures encouraged people to take up a fight for change against corrupt governments and their powerful backers.

“This has been a very long persecution of Julian Assange, to wear him down and break his resistance through torture.

“The same playbook was used before against workers fighting for their rights. Des Warren is an example; he led a fight against the ‘lump’—casualised labour—in the building workers’ strike in the early 1970s. He was charged under archaic conspiracy laws and thrown in jail [Warren was one of the “Shrewsbury 24” building workers framed up under 200 trumped up charges].

“It was akin to the treatment of the Tolpuddle Martyrs in the early nineteenth century [the Dorset labourers who were convicted and transported to Australia for swearing an oath to form a union in 1834, eventually pardoned and brought home by a campaign waged by a mass working-class movement.]

“I read Des Warren’s book, *The Key to my Cell*. They broke his health through the medication they gave him while he was inside; the treatment he received was abhorrent. He was imprisoned by the Tories and kept in jail under Labour. I first learned about his case as I started to become involved in industrial organisation. It taught me about the role of the state and the corruption in the trade unions who abandoned him.

“This is not a thing of the past. We’ve seen in our own recent strike at Royal Mail the widespread victimisation of union reps and members who were sacked or

suspended and hung out to dry by the Communication Workers Union.

“Nothing would change under any Labour government. We would have the same struggles. [Labour leader Sir Keir] Starmer is no better than [Prime Minister Rishi] Sunak; that is shown in his support for the genocide against the Palestinians. The British government is responsible for their plight. They washed their hands of the Palestinians in 1948 and now they are trying to wash their hands of Assange by handing him over to the US.

“The persecution of Assange is connected to the mass protests against the killing of women and children in Gaza because they want to criminalise the fight for a peaceful and better world.”

George is a postal worker in Scotland:

“There are a lot of things at stake in the fight for the freedom of Julian Assange. The British justice system is on trial with these trumped-up charges of espionage to extradite him to America. He is a political prisoner. They have already kept him in prison for five years. What is at stake is the future of genuine journalism and freedom of the press, both in the UK and globally.

“I learned about Julian Assange and Wikileaks from the beginning and I also followed Chelsea Manning. The footage of the “Collateral Murder” video of the US Apache helicopter firing on civilians with the pilots shouting ‘Light them up’ will stay with me and it was shared around my workplace. That and the photographs of the torture in the Abu Ghraib prison summed up the illegal war against Iraq led by the US and Britain.

“Assange is paying a terrible price for telling the truth. For our generation that was like the photo from the Vietnam war of the girl running from her village which had been torched by napalm. The importance of the truth is to stop such atrocities happening again.

“The British legal system is prepared to bring itself into disrepute over the imprisonment and extradition of Assange to the US. Sunak wants to give the police more powers to stop the protests [against the war in Gaza]. There is a connection between the two.

“There is no real parliamentary opposition to speak of, with Starmer’s Labour Party trying to smear mass protests as ‘antisemitic’ for wanting to stop a genocide. This is happening across Europe and the world.

“Workers also face being criminalised in the fight for their jobs and terms and conditions; we have seen this at Royal Mail with the mass victimisation of reps during our dispute. They did not want us to win, the optics of us being on strike and winning public support. They wanted

to make an example of us.

“It was more than pay. It was the terms and conditions being taken away for future generations. You were always aware on the picket line that the slightest excuse would be used by the police to make arrests because of all the anti-strike laws. The CWU threw the framed-up union reps under the bus with the Falconer Review headed up by the Labour peer and Tony Blair’s ex-flat mate. This included having to sign Non-Disclosure Agreements.

“I have more in common with workers in Palestine or Lebanon who only want a decent, peaceful life and future for their children than I do with the British government backing these war crimes and destroying their homes.

“I see a clear connection between the US and British persecution of Assange and the deliberate and targeted killing of journalists in Gaza by the Israeli Defence Forces. These journalists have sacrificed everything for the right of the world to know about the genocide taking place in real time.

“For exposing war crimes such as in Iraq, Julian Assange is in prison while the perpetrators are at large and have enriched themselves. Remember Tony Blair as the Middle East peace envoy!

“As a journalist and defender of human rights it was Assange’s duty to expose the horrific war crimes perpetrated by an invading army against civilians. Holding an Australian citizen for five years in inhuman conditions has taken a devastating effect on his physical and mental health to the point of nearly killing him. Free Assange!

Read and share “The fight to free Assange is a fight against war!” Send in your own message of support for stopping the extradition of Julian Assange and demanding his immediate and unconditional freedom.



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