

The fight to free Assange is the fight against war!

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On Tuesday and Wednesday, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange will seek leave to make his final appeal to the High Court in Britain for the right to argue against his extradition to the United States on charges under the Espionage Act carrying a life sentence. A rejection would leave him no other options through the UK legal system and could put him on a plane to the US the same day.

Assange's freedom must be demanded by workers and youth in Britain, the US, his native Australia and throughout the world.

He has been hounded by the intelligence agencies of the imperialist powers for 14 years for exposing war crimes, industrial-scale human rights abuses and anti-democratic intrigues. For nearly five of those years, he has been held in the UK's Belmarsh maximum security prison, in life-threatening conditions, and denied his basic rights, including bail.

The case of Assange embodies the struggle against imperialist war, the authoritarian measures used to suppress anti-war sentiment and the propaganda lies used to justify it all.

He was targeted by Washington and London for publishing leaked documents detailing the crimes of the US government and its allies in Afghanistan and Iraq, and their conspiracies with dictatorships around the world. Assange sought to warn the population of the brutality the ruling class was capable of. He described WikiLeaks as "the intelligence agency of the people."

Those warnings are now being daily and horrifically confirmed by the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine, where hundreds of thousands have likely lost their lives, and in the Israeli genocide in Gaza, already responsible for at least 30,000 deaths, mainly women and children. Both are rooted in the drive by the imperialist powers for a new redivision of the globe, its people and its

resources, which marks the ever-deeper descent into a third world war.

The persecution of Assange, which includes a CIA assassination plot and which has ravaged his health and stolen over a decade of his life already, has been the spearhead of a crackdown on opposition to war, in preparation for the eruption of military violence now underway. It was intended to set a chilling precedent that anyone who gets in the way of the war plans of the imperialist powers will be silenced and destroyed.

The attempt to brutally silence journalists that began with Assange has now led to a policy of mass murder. Nearly 100 media workers and many of their family members have been killed by the Israel Defense Forces in the space of just four months, in a clear campaign of targeted assassinations to stop the truth of the genocide being reported. In Israel, Britain, the United States, Europe and throughout the world, draconian legislation is being used to criminalise anti-genocide protests, with thousands arrested.

"If wars can be started by lies ... peace can be started by truth," Assange told a rally against the occupation of Afghanistan in London's Trafalgar Square in 2011. There has been no shortage of wars and lies since.

In Ukraine, the NATO powers claim to be defending "sovereignty" and "democracy" by working with fascist forces to dragoon the population into a fight to the last man designed to weaken and destabilise Russia.

In Gaza, they support Prime Minister Netanyahu's cynical invocation of Israel's "right to self-defence" as a justification for the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians.

Assange's fate, the fight for his freedom, depends on the development of a mass anti-war movement against the imperialist pyromaniacs responsible for these catastrophes.

That movement has begun, with mass protests of millions across the world demanding an end to Israel's genocide in Gaza, which is only the first stage of a war across the Middle East, waged by the US and its satellites against Iran and its allies in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon, to secure American hegemony over the oil-rich region.

This mass movement must place the demand for Assange's freedom at the centre of the fight against genocide and war.

Under these conditions, Assange case's will take on explosive political dimensions in its next stage, whether in the form of an appeal before the UK High Court, or a defence mounted in the United States. His tormentors in Washington may think they can act with impunity, but they have not reckoned on the enormous popular sympathy for Assange and WikiLeaks.

The working class and young people are at the beginning of an election year in which the two main parties presented to them—Republican and Democratic in the US, Conservative and Labour in Britain—are despised. Neither country's ruling class is in a strong position to mount an unprecedented, legally obscene extradition and prosecution.

It will be lost on no one that while they persecute Assange, the US and its allies have mounted a chorus proclaiming the death in custody of Alexei Navalny as the ultimate proof of the criminal character of the Putin regime, shedding an ocean of tears over this racist crook. And millions will not accept the ruling elite's right to punish someone who has revealed previous war crimes when they are mobilising week after week against the newest crimes sanctioned in Gaza by "Genocide Joe" Biden and Rishi Sunak.

After more than a decade of the relentless persecution of Julian Assange by the imperialist powers, it is time for workers and young people to draw the lessons of the struggle for his freedom. At this critical juncture, it is urgently necessary to unite the fight against war with the struggle to free Julian Assange.

Like all great defense campaigns of the past, the fight to free Julian Assange can only succeed to the extent that it mobilizes the working class, linking the struggle to free Assange with the struggle against war and the fight by millions of workers all over the world against the brutal attacks on jobs, wages, essential services and basic democratic rights.

This involves a conscious rejection of all the political forces, from Labour in the UK to the Democratic Party in the US, that have led both the Gaza genocide and Assange's persecution.

The *World Socialist Web Site*, the International Committee of the Fourth International and its affiliated Socialist Equality Parties will continue to wage an unwavering and determined struggle to rally the working class in this fight.



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