

Journalists, filmmakers, artists demand end to persecution of Julian Assange

2 April 2018

A group of writers, journalists, artists, film-makers and activists have issued a statement demanding that the government of Ecuador restore Julian Assange's right to free speech and end the isolating blockade it has imposed on him in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London.

Last week, the Ecuadorian government, alleging Assange issued "messages that might interfere with other states," ended visitation rights for the noted journalist and political dissident and installed jammers to prevent him from accessing the internet. Over the previous week, Assange had made statements critical of the arrest of former Catalan regional president Carles Puigdemont, and questioned the official claim that Russia used a military-grade nerve agent to poison a double agent on British soil.

For more than six years, Assange has been effectively imprisoned in the Embassy, where he sought refuge after the Swedish government levelled concocted charges of sexual assault against him, which have since been dropped.

The letter, reprinted below, has been greeted with silence by the mainstream press and has remained unreported in any major US newspaper.

THE ISOLATION OF JULIAN ASSANGE MUST STOP

We call on the government of Ecuador to allow Julian Assange his right of freedom of speech.

If it was ever clear that the case of Julian Assange was never just a legal case, but a struggle for the protection of basic human rights, it is now.

Citing his critical tweets about the recent detention of Catalan president Carles Puigdemont in Germany, and following pressure from the US, Spanish and UK governments, the Ecuadorian government has installed an electronic jammer to stop Assange communicating

with the outside world via the internet and phone. As if ensuring his total isolation, the Ecuadorian government is also refusing to allow him to receive visitors. Despite two UN rulings describing his detention as unlawful and mandating his immediate release, Assange has been effectively imprisoned since he was first placed in isolation in Wandsworth prison in London in December 2010. He has never been charged with a crime. The Swedish case against him collapsed and was withdrawn, while the United States has stepped up efforts to prosecute him. His only "crime" is that of a true journalist -- telling the world the truths that people have a right to know.

Under its previous president, the Ecuadorian government bravely stood against the bullying might of the United States and granted Assange political asylum as a political refugee. International law and the morality of human rights was on its side.

Today, under extreme pressure from Washington and its collaborators, another government in Ecuador justifies its gagging of Assange by stating that "Assange's behaviour, through his messages on social media, put at risk good relations which this country has with the UK, the rest of the EU and other nations."

This censorious attack on free speech is not happening in Turkey, Saudi Arabia or China; it is right in the heart of London. If the Ecuadorian government does not cease its unworthy action, it, too, will become an agent of persecution rather than the valiant nation that stood up for freedom and for free speech. If the EU and the UK continue to participate in the scandalous silencing of a true dissident in their midst, it will mean that free speech is indeed dying in Europe.

This is not just a matter of showing support and solidarity. We are appealing to all who care about basic human rights to call on the government of Ecuador to continue defending the rights of a courageous free

speech activist, journalist and whistleblower.

We ask that his basic human rights be respected as an Ecuadorian citizen and internationally protected person and that he not be silenced or expelled. If there is no freedom of speech for Julian Assange, there is no freedom of speech for any of us -- regardless of the disparate opinions we hold.

We call on President Moreno to end the isolation of Julian Assange now.

List of signatories (in alphabetic order):

Pamela Anderson, actress and activist

Jacob Appelbaum, freelance journalist

Renata Avila, International Human Rights Lawyer

Sally Burch, British/Ecuadorian journalist

Alicia Castro, Argentina's ambassador to the United Kingdom 2012-16

Naomi Colvin, Courage Foundation

Noam Chomsky, linguist and political theorist

Brian Eno, musician

Joseph Farrell, WikiLeaks Ambassador and board member of The Centre for Investigative Journalism

Teresa Forcades, Benedictine nun, Montserrat Monastery

Charles Glass, American-British author, journalist, broadcaster

Chris Hedges, journalist

Srećko Horvat, philosopher, Democracy in Europe Movement (DiEM25)

Jean Michel Jarre, musician

John Kiriakou, former CIA counterterrorism officer and former senior investigator, U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Lauri Love, computer scientist and activist

Ray McGovern, former CIA analyst, Presidential advisor

John Pilger, journalist and film-maker

Angela Richter, theater director, Germany

Saskia Sassen, sociologist, Columbia University

Oliver Stone, film-maker

Vaughan Smith, English journalist

Yanis Varoufakis, economist, former Greek finance minister

Natalia Viana, investigative journalist and co-director of Agencia publica, Brazil

Ai Weiwei, artist

Vivienne Westwood, fashion designer and activist

Slavoj Žižek, philosopher, Birkbeck Institute for

Humanities

To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>