

Australian workers and youth speak out in defence of Julian Assange

By our reporters
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Over the past weeks, Socialist Equality Party (SEP) campaigners have spoken to workers, students and young people about an SEP meeting in Sydney and global Facebook livestream this Sunday in defence of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

The event is being held amid stepped up attempts by US and British authorities to force Assange out of Ecuador's London embassy and into their clutches so that he can be prosecuted for WikiLeaks' role in exposing war crimes, illegal diplomatic intrigues and mass spying.

The sentiments of ordinary people in support of the courageous journalist and publisher stand in sharp contrast to the collaboration of the Liberal-National Coalition government, the Labor Party and the entire political establishment, including the trade unions and the Greens, with the persecution of Assange.

Kerry, a customer service employee in Sydney, told WSWs reporters that "Julian Assange is a pioneer. He's someone who has really gone the extra mile to find out the truth and to put it out to the public. We need to know what's going on. He's being attacked by governments because WikiLeaks touched on things that they didn't want ordinary people to know about.

"What WikiLeaks exposed about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan shocked me, because I had not seen it anywhere else. These wars have been disgusting. How can governments be allowed to do these things without any respect for human life, or other countries and their people?

"What we're being told by the corporate media is just for their benefit and to brainwash us into thinking that they're policies are in the interests of working people. In reality, everything is driven by greed. I don't think society is heading down a good path at all. Things don't seem to be getting better. The gap

between the rich and the poor just keeps widening. I believe in people power. The more people that are gathered together to fight, maybe something will change.

"The Australian government is not representing what most Australians think should happen to Assange. If you were to ask most people, I'm sure they would say that the way he's being treated is wrong. The government isn't reflecting our views. The Australian and US governments are scratching each others' backs."

Hilary, who works at a small business in Melbourne, commented: "Julian Assange is in a ghastly situation. I think it is appalling that the Australian government won't defend him as an Australian citizen. It sends shivers down your back.

"There is no principle in what they're doing. It is because of the alliance with the US. They're not willing to upset the bigger players. People in Australia think we've got a proper government, but we don't. When push comes to shove, they are puppets.

"The fact that the 'lefts' and the Greens are refusing to defend Assange is part of the same thing. It is exposing them. They're trying to line up with Murdoch and with the United States, in the hope that they will be chosen to be in an Australian government.

"Ordinary people support Assange, but there is not much opportunity for them to express how they feel. There is no vehicle. The media is not behaving like the media should. Instead it is just a megaphone for whoever owns it. If you're a journalist working for them, you have to say what you're told, you can't maintain any principled position. Assange has shown what a journalist should be."

Dawit, a worker originally from Ethiopia, spoke to the WSWs in Newcastle, a regional centre north of

Sydney. He condemned the actions of the imperialist powers, stating: “The US has extended its reach to almost all nations in the world through military intervention and so-called ‘development assistance.’ They don’t want Assange disclosing how they are doing this, because it reveals the crimes they are committing.

“The information that WikiLeaks has released is really very important. It has revealed the persecution of people in developing countries all over the world by the major powers. WikiLeaks has released information on how African leaders are corrupted and steal money to give back to the rich for their mansions and to give money to big corporations in France and Britain. Regular people have no way of knowing the extent of this without what WikiLeaks has done.”

Robert, a retired miner in Newcastle, said: “The Australian government’s role in the attacks on Assange has been pathetic, gutless, disgraceful. They just do what the US deep state tells them to do. The banking and military conglomerate that controls America behind the scenes told [former Australian prime minister John] Howard to go to war in Afghanistan, and later we went to Syria.”

Robert spoke out against the unsubstantiated and pro-war claims that Russia has “interfered” in US politics, and that China is attempting to do the same in Australia. “The claims of foreign interference in elections these days are a load of rubbish,” he said. “You think America hasn’t messed around with our elections?”

“What they’re really afraid of is losing their grip on the population. I heard that 60-70 percent of the US population doesn’t believe the mainstream media, and are looking elsewhere for information. The free flow of information, which Assange has been providing, is a threat to the powers that be.”

Rhianon, a nursing student at the University of Newcastle, stated: “The treatment of Julian Assange is worrisome because it details the lengths governing bodies will go to keep information from the people they govern. This is information which everyone should have access to. It is our right to be informed on the actions of those we employ to represent us and to run our society.

“Assange attempted to reveal the corruption and violation of ethics by governments despite the risk to

himself: a noble and praiseworthy task. However, he is being treated like a criminal by those who wish to hide their activities in order to protect their own interests at our expense.”

Michael, a student at the University of Melbourne, said: “The allegations of sexual assault against Assange were shown to be false. The real reason why these powerful governments are going after him is not because of his personality or his personal affairs, but because he exposed the US intelligence agencies real role and war crimes.

“Governments are starting to see how dangerous WikiLeaks’ sort of revelations are. They go against the narrative of countries ‘doing good’ when they go off to other parts of the world. They are supposedly fighting for freedom. The leaks reveal that it’s basically just a money grabbing exercise. For example, the US is in the Middle East for oil.

“This is all part of the drive to another major war. The attack on democratic rights is a characteristic of fascism and the drive to war. While I wouldn’t say any countries today are outright fascist, you could see similar trends to what took place under Hitler, Mussolini and Franco. They all violently suppressed any opposition to the ideology and policies of the state.

Khaled, a pensioner in the working-class Sydney suburb of Auburn, said: “One clear image I have from WikiLeaks is of the American soldiers in a military helicopter firing on unarmed civilians in Iraq. The release of this kind of information gives an indication of what the superpowers are doing behind the scene. It is still indelibly etched in the minds of those who saw it. We have to get behind Assange and find him a safe haven.”

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