

Youth at climate rally in Leeds, England speak out to defend Julian Assange

By our reporters
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WSWS reporters spoke about the arrest and imprisoning of Julian Assange with young people who attended last Friday's rally against climate change in Leeds, England.

Martha, a student at Notre Dame College in Leeds said, "I have known that Julian Assange had been threatened with arrest for a while. Now it has happened and it's terrible. Home Secretary Sajid Javid and the Tory government are afraid of what the US government will do if they don't toe the line. They are not brave enough to stand up to the US.

"Assange is in the forefront of the fight for freedom of speech against corrupt governments, especially by revealing US state security secrets. I agree that this attack on Assange is an attack on all reporting and all truth telling.

"I think [Labour Party leader] Jeremy Corbyn is lazy. Only now is he saying 'what should have happened'. The left wing in general needs to be more active in opposing [far right] populism in Europe. I think we should do whatever it takes to secure freedom for Assange and save him from being punished for doing the right thing."

Eddie, a Leeds music student said, "Assange is guilty of being a hero, guilty of telling the truth, guilty of exposing US war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"When he was arrested some people said the police were only 'doing their job'. But does that mean arresting someone who has done nothing wrong and in fact has done the right thing?

"The attack on Assange is an attack on democracy and on freedom of speech. As for Jeremy Corbyn, it's not just yesterday but what has he been doing for the whole four years of his leadership of the Labour Party?"

Callum, a politics student from Leeds said, "In terms

of his political work Assange is definitely a hero. He told the truth about the terrible things that the US government have done in Afghanistan and Iraq; war crimes committed in the name of peace. But the whole world knows it was all about oil.

"I recently saw the video showing British troops shooting at pictures of Jeremy Corbyn. I think it's symptomatic of the attitude of the military to politics. I have friends in the army cadets. They have told me that the officers encourage them to be racist and homophobic. Some of them rebel but others are indoctrinated. It makes it difficult to be friends with them.

"The authorities say that they are doing things 'peacefully' but it's never like that. Think about what happened at Charlottesville [a peaceful counter-protest in the United States attacked by far-right forces] as opposed to left-wing rallies. The left-wing get maced, they get rubber bullets constantly. The right-wing get to patrol the streets and attack innocent people. That sort of thing really shows the position of the state."

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