

“He’s not just a journalist, he’s one of the most significant journalists of all time”

Attendees at London meeting to free Assange and Manning speak out

By our reporters
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Audience members at last Sunday’s meeting in London defence of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, called by the Socialist Equality Party, spoke to reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Luis, a musician, said, “I think defending Assange is vital. There will be a cost if we do not do so, suffered by many others.

“It’s important to remember that Assange has won many, many awards. He’s not just a journalist, he’s one of the most significant journalists of all time. We are talking about someone that has influenced the way information spreads. It’s massively important, especially in the context of the censorship of the internet, which we cannot allow to happen.

“We need to spread the message because people will only know about these issues if we talk about it—the media are not going to. If we don’t do anything, the slander against Assange will be allowed to take hold. It was encouraging to see an MSNBC poll asking whether Assange should be prosecuted in the US and 92 percent of people said ‘No.’

“I do feel like there’s a big movement building. You know I actually think we can get him free, and soon.”

Louise said the meeting “clarified a lot of things. I came out of curiosity and found it very enlightening ... I thought the links made between war and the issue of Julian Assange were very interesting.”

Assange and WikiLeaks “helped us see things in a different way; they’ve opened our eyes to a lot of issues. Unfortunately, people seem to have gone silent and have forgotten about them. But it needs to be continued: we need to talk about it, think about it, write

about it.”

Mayra said, “The meeting has been fantastic. It is the only organisation that has been at the front of defending Julian Assange’s rights. His human rights are being violated, not only by the British government but by the American government ... They are trying to bring back a form of colonialism in the 21st century. But we are in the 21st century and people like Trump need to respect people’s rights. People need to know the truth, and Julian Assange has told us the truth about what is happening in the world. We need to know what they’re doing: killing innocent people for resources.

“I wanted to take this opportunity to tell Trump: hands off Venezuela! We have to say to the American government to leave people in South America alone. We are not your backyard. I am from Ecuador. I also have to say to [Ecuador President] Lenin Moreno: stop being a puppet. He must have more independence and autonomy about decisions made about Ecuador. We must free Julian Assange!”

Sara, from Italy, said, “I’ve been a journalist for most of my life and I think the real mission of a journalist is to make people aware of reality. If you look at what Julian Assange did, you can see that this is precisely his purpose with WikiLeaks. And he put his own life at risk to carry it out. So, it is very important to take action for a man who took such a very important step. Because being aware of what is really happening is the first step toward building a fair world.

“What we all share in this moment is a feeling of urgency, of the need to defend Assange.”

Jeff works in London and is a long-time supporter of

WikiLeaks who attended the recent protests defending Assange at Southwark and Westminster courts. He said, “I think this was a very informative meeting. It shows there are people all around the world who are very concerned about what is going on with Julian Assange.

“We had several speakers, including one who came from Germany and was very interesting about the history of his party. The campaign is going to continue until whenever it is that the court decides to extradite or not extradite him to America.”

Citing Assange’s description of WikiLeaks as “objective but not neutral,” Jeff said, “Objective journalism is not about drawing a perfect line between a geologist on the one side and a flat Earther on the other. If one side is right and the other is wrong, if human rights abuses are being committed and people are denying they have been committed—and we know for a fact they have been committed [against Assange]. Objectivity means reporting the facts.

“You have to lean towards wherever the truth is and who is making the factual claims and our media haven’t. They haven’t even been reporting in the middle when it comes to Assange and WikiLeaks. They have been leaning towards the narrative of the security state and the established power.”

Statements read out at the meeting from workers and young people around the world showed “WikiLeaks is actually really popular. One of the speakers said that the workers in America are sympathetic to Assange. The speaker from Germany said his taxi driver was sympathetic! There is a huge disconnect between masses of working people, everyday people, on the one hand and the established power and politicians on the other. And included in that bubble of power is the mainstream media.”

Referring to the 50-week prison sentence imposed on Assange, Jeff said, “At Westminster Magistrates Court we weren’t even allowed into the public gallery, where we know there was standing room. It’s outrageous. Isn’t there a slogan that for justice to be done, it has to be seen to be done?”

Jeff said of the resolution passed at the meeting, “It was passed unanimously. It was very well worded and strongly worded. Everyone here supports what it had to say.”

Jane, who lives in London, said, “We are here today

because we are seeing the truth of what Assange and Manning have exposed to the world. Without them we would still be left in the dark. We are here to make sure they are freed and can live their lives without being prosecuted or hunted down by stooges and CIA operatives.

“I think WikiLeaks has achieved a great deal and done what no other journalists have done. They’ve blown the whistle and revealed what even top-secret agencies have hidden from people. It was a productive meeting today. I think it has mobilised everyone together. If everyone here has three or five contacts, they can spread the word and fight for truth and justice.

“I was so impressed that there were speakers from different countries here. The governments not the people have turned their backs on the whistle-blowers like Assange, Manning, [Edward] Snowden and many more. The masses now know the corporate media is bought. They should be on Assange’s and Manning’s side.”

Mimi, from Romania, said, “I support Julian Assange and this cause. I saw Assange on TV years ago and I have followed him since. He is for freedom of speech and that is what we want.

“We need a global movement to free Assange and we have to be united against the torture of Assange and Manning.”

Peter from London is a long-time reader of the WSWS. He said, “The meeting was strong and inspiring. Most of all it put the onus on one thing—it is only the international working class that is powerful enough to free Assange and Manning. All the rest is delusional really and that is the strength of the *World Socialist Web Site* .”

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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