

Demonstration to free Julian Assange this Monday in Montreal

By Richard Dufour
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A demonstration will be held this Monday outside the US Consulate in Montreal in defense of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. A courageous journalist and publisher, Assange is being persecuted by the US, British and Australian governments, with the complicity of Canada, for exposing great power intrigues around the world and American war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Currently held in solitary confinement in a high security prison in Britain, Assange is facing extradition to the United States and a show trial on charges of espionage, with the prospect of a life sentence of 175 years. UN Special Rapporteur for Torture Nils Melzer and other medical experts have stated that Assange shows signs of prolonged psychological torture, and that he could die unless he is released to receive proper medical care.

Assange's extradition hearing begins in London on February 24, the same day as the Montreal demonstration. Similar actions are being organized around the world.

In an e-mail interview with the *World Socialist Web Site*, demonstration organizer Elizabeth Leier, an independent journalist, stressed the urgency of coming to the defense of Assange.

"I'm holding the rally because I feel this case is tremendously important and holds serious implications for journalism, free speech and human rights around the world," wrote Leier. "Unsurprisingly, given the state of our mainstream media, this issue has had very little traction in Canada.

"This is deplorable as the prosecution of Julian Assange has very concrete and serious implications for Canadian journalism and sovereignty," she continued. "Should he be extradited, this will set a precedent by which it will be possible to prosecute and extradite a

foreign journalist for publishing truthful and meaningful information outside of the prosecuting jurisdiction. This is an absurd and dangerous prospect that should alarm all those who value freedom of the press, democracy and sovereignty."

Asked about the response she has received to this important initiative, Leier had the following to say:

"The response has been quite lackluster thus far, which doesn't surprise me. ... [T]he lack of media attention this case has received is quite significant. When Assange has been covered in mainstream Canadian media, the coverage simply echoes the same misinformation we've heard time and time again.

"Those organizations which should know about this case, the media and their union—the Fédération Professionnelle des Journalistes du Québec (FPJQ) – have remained silent as to their position regarding this prosecution. I think we can infer from that silence that they prefer to toe the line and not disrupt official narratives, in spite of it being against their own professional integrity and interests.

"I do want to highlight the positive response I've received from many independent media outlets, individuals and political organizations, including the *World Socialist Web Site*. Hopefully more people will learn about the event and recognize the importance of this issue."

The Socialist Equality Party (Canada) and the *World Socialist Web Site* strongly urge all their readers and supporters in the Montreal area to participate in this demonstration as part of the global campaign in support of Assange and the courageous whistleblower Chelsea Manning.

The demonstration will take place on Monday February 24 at 5:30 PM, in front of the US Consulate in Montreal, 1134 Sainte-Catherine St West (corner of

Stanley St and near the Peel Metro station.)

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>