

For a worldwide campaign to prevent Julian Assange's rendition to the US!

For the formation of a Global Defence Committee to secure his freedom!

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Parties affiliated with the International Committee of the Fourth International call for a global campaign to stop WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's extradition to the United States, and to secure both his and whistleblower Chelsea Manning's freedom.

Only by organizing protest actions on an international scale—meetings, rallies, demonstrations, and public conferences—will it be possible to frustrate and defeat the plans of reactionary governments, their intelligence agencies and political agents to silence and destroy Julian Assange. The aim of this campaign must be to politically arouse and mobilize the international working class—the overwhelming majority of the population and the most powerful social force on the planet—in defense of Julian Assange and, in fact, the democratic and social rights of all workers.

On June 12, British Home Secretary Sajid Javid certified extradition proceedings, setting the clock ticking on a politically manipulated pseudo-legal process that is scheduled to conclude in February 2020 with Julian Assange's rendition to the United States.

The Home Secretary's rubber stamping of the extradition process, just one week after a Swedish judge stated that there were no grounds to hold Assange, has exposed the lies that have been used to discredit and isolate him. From the very beginning, the aim of the state authorities—in the United States, Britain, Sweden, and Australia—has been to silence and destroy this courageous journalist, who exposed imperialist war crimes. Chelsea Manning, who possesses the heart of a lion and is an exemplar of human decency and integrity, has been likewise targeted for destruction.

Every aspect of Julian Assange's treatment by the British government is a travesty of justice. In a June 13 interview on BBC Radio 4, British Home Secretary Sajid Javid boasted: "First of all I am very pleased the police were able to apprehend him [Assange] and now he is rightly behind bars because he broke UK law." In fact, Assange broke no laws at all. He legitimately sought political asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy in 2012, when it became clear that the authorities in Sweden, where he faced trumped up allegations of sexual assault, were planning to extradite him to the United States.

Emma Arbuthnot, the judge who is presiding over the kangaroo court, is the wife of a reactionary Conservative Party politician, James Arbuthnot. Before entering the House of Lords, Baron Arbuthnot held a high

position at the Ministry of Defense. He has the closest connections to the British deep state and arms industry. He has also been officially reprimanded for diverting public funds for private use. Emma Arbuthnot, given her personal connections, clearly should not be presiding over court proceedings that will determine the fate of Julian Assange. But Arbuthnot has rejected requests that she recuse herself.

Everyone knows how the legal farce presided over by Judge Arbuthnot is supposed to end. Every detail of the process has been carefully scripted. The lines Arbuthnot intends to deliver in court, when she renders her decision, have already been written and committed to memory. The proceedings are to conclude in February with the rendition of Julian Assange to the United States, where he will be placed in the clutches of the war criminals he has done so much to expose. On the basis of the charges already filed, Julian Assange faces a prison term of 175 years. The horrendous conditions of the incarceration with which he is threatened will make a mockery of the US Constitution's proscription of "cruel and unusual punishment."

Julian Assange's freedom must be secured. An international campaign must be organized in his defense. There is no time to lose. What occurs between now and February is decisive. It is necessary to organize a global campaign to mobilize the international working class, student youth, artists, journalists and intellectuals to save Julian Assange's life. The broad-based, deeply-felt, but still latent sympathy and solidarity of millions of working people and youth for Julian Assange must be transformed into a conscious political movement, fighting to defeat the plot to send him to the US and to secure his liberty.

Assange is the victim of a monstrous criminal conspiracy, involving the most powerful governments in the world, the intelligence agencies and their mouthpieces in the corporate media.

There will come a time when all the sordid details of this plan to destroy Assange will become fully known to an outraged public: how the plans were laid to ensnare the WikiLeaks founder with fraudulent claims of sexual assault, how prosecutors in Sweden procured the perjured allegations, how the intelligence agencies in Stockholm, London, Sydney and Quito coordinated their activities, and how the United States government deployed its arsenal of bribes and threats as it masterminded Assange's pursuit and persecution.

The persecution of Assange is the spearhead of a massive assault on democratic rights, aimed at destroying freedom of speech, illegalizing investigative journalism, intimidating and terrorizing critics, preventing the exposure of government crimes and suppressing mass popular opposition to social inequality and war.

Already, the unveiling of Espionage Act charges against Assange has opened the floodgates for international attacks on journalists, including police raids in Australia over articles exposing war crimes and spying, and moves in France to prosecute journalists, who have exposed government complicity in the genocidal war against Yemen.

Within the US, the Trump administration is seeking to abolish the First Amendment protections of the Constitution in the most serious attack on free speech in American history. Globally, it is trying to create the conditions for the prosecution of journalists, publishers and activists everywhere, who could similarly face trumped-up US charges and extradition if they fall foul of the American government.

The ruling elites are responding to the growing social opposition to the capitalist system by promoting fascist and extreme right-wing movements, employing ever more brazen police-state measures, and escalating their preparations for war. They are victimizing Assange to intimidate workers, young people, artists and intellectuals, and to create a precedent for mass political repression.

But the international working class is more powerful than all of the governments, intelligence agencies and corporations combined. Just as the capitalist class is using the persecution of Assange as the linchpin of their plans for dictatorship, so the working class must make his defence the focal point for a counteroffensive against militarism and all attacks on democratic and social rights.

Victory in this struggle requires a political perspective. The defense of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning must be guided by a global strategy that consciously links the fight to defend democratic rights to the real and growing social struggle of the international working class against capitalist exploitation and political oppression. There is a rising tide of international class struggle, which provides the powerful mass foundation for the struggle to achieve Julian's freedom. Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning—like their persecuted brothers and sisters throughout the world—are, in the final analysis, class war prisoners.

The growing worldwide strike movement—including those of teachers in the United States and Poland, the wildcat action of Maquiladora workers in Mexico, the general strike in India, the mass movement in Algeria, Zimbabwe and Sudan, the irrepressible Yellow Vest protests in France, and, most recently, the demonstrations of millions of workers, students and youth in Hong Kong—testifies to the determination of the common people to fight for their fundamental civil liberties and social rights. These struggles have terrified the corporate and financial oligarchies of every country.

The movement to secure Julian Assange's freedom must come from below. Moral appeals to the governments that are persecuting him are less than useless. Assange's freedom must be fought for independently of, and in opposition to, the political agents of the ruling class. Guided by a strategy that is based on a correct appraisal of social reality, this fight can be won. The ruthlessness of the ruling elites should not be underestimated, but they are not omnipotent. Pessimism, the most self-paralyzing of all emotions, cannot contribute anything to the fight but demoralization. What can be achieved will be determined in struggle.

To advance this struggle to a new and higher stage, the *World Socialist Web Site*, the political voice of the International Committee of the Fourth International and its affiliated parties throughout the world, calls for the formation of a Global Defense Committee. The purpose of this committee is to organize and coordinate the international fight to bring to an end the persecution of Julian Assange and secure his freedom. The will to fight must be converted into mass action. The aim of this statement is to begin the work of forming the Global Defense Committee and developing a program of international action.

We welcome and seek the collaboration—on the basis of a principled commitment to the defense of democratic rights—of all progressive, socialist and left-wing individuals and organizations in this historic fight. We do not require or expect that those who join this committee agree with all aspects of the political views and program advanced by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International. There must be place for a wide range of positions—necessarily excluding those of the political right—among those engaged in this critical defense campaign. We only require that those who join the committee are unconditionally committed to the defense of democratic rights, and recognize that the freedom of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning depends upon the building of a popular mass movement.

No one who is seriously committed to the defense of democratic rights can stand on the sidelines. The case of Julian Assange is a critical twenty-first century battleground in the defense of free speech, truth, and the fight against exploitation, dictatorship and war, the basic evils of the world capitalist system.

Statement of the International Editorial Board of the World Socialist Web Site 20 June 2019

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