

Mobilising journalists and media workers to demand the Australian Media Union speak out in defence of Julian Assange

Classconscious.org are working with U.S. researcher and writer [jimmysllama](#) to mobilise media workers and journalists internationally to come out and publicly pressure the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) to act and speak out in defence of Julian Assange. The MEAA is the Australian trade union representing media workers and journalists. We are supporting efforts to raise this demand publicly on May 3rd, 2019 – World Press Freedom Day. In particular, we are asking journalists and media workers to sign a statement that can be read [here at the World Press Freedom Day website](#), which is promoting this letter and protests endorsed by labor organisations to defend whistleblowers and journalists.

We believe this is an important step in the campaign to defend Assange for the following reasons:

- 1) It correctly puts the focus on Julian as a persecuted publisher and journalist himself and counters the false narrative that he is a hacker, whistleblower or even a spy. In reality, Wikileaks is a brave publishing house that has published classified information in the public interest. Until recently, Julian was working as the editor of Wikileaks until the conditions of his asylum were too onerous and forced him to step down from the role.

If Julian can be extradited to the U.S. on espionage charges for publishing classified U.S. documents, the same fate could await any journalist or media outlet globally who takes these steps. This is an incredibly, serious attack on the right of journalists to perform their job of keeping the public informed.

2) It is crucial to Julian's legal defence. The Trump administration is determined to deny that Wikileaks is a media publisher. In 2017, U.S. Secretary of State – Mike Pompeo – labelled Wikileaks a “hostile non-state intelligence agency” in order to justify using the Espionage Act against Assange and to circumvent the First Amendment rights of the U.S. Constitution. This tactic also explains the determination of the Trump administration in the re-jailing of Chelsea Manning in an effort to coerce her into giving false testimony that Wikileaks actively helped her to obtain the classified military documents.

That Julian's persecution is a clear-cut case of a publisher facing persecution for doing their job has become even more clear as the slanders cast against him have fallen away. In 2017, the politicised Swedish sexual-assault investigation was closed with no charges being laid. We also know that the Grand Jury related to Wikileaks is pursuing charges related to the releases of 2010 and has nothing to do with the bogus allegations of “Russian collusion” in relation to the 2016 election of Donald Trump.

3) It will fight back against the reactionary role that some elements of the media have played. Unfortunately, except for honorable exceptions – since Julian sought asylum in the London Ecuadorian Embassy in 2012, there has been conspicuous silence from many professional journalists. Worse still, some outlets, most notably the Guardian newspaper, have

consistently attempted to smear Julian. We feel it is important that as many fellow journalists as possible speak out in a coordinated fashion to change this dynamic.

4) Only a powerful, broad-based campaign will bring enough pressure on both the Australian Labor and Liberal major parliamentary parties – who have wholeheartedly supported the persecution of Julian because of their commitment to the U.S. alliance to advance the interests of the Australian ruling class – to compel them to use their diplomatic and legal powers to bring Julian safely home, as they would any other citizen.

The international working class and youth is the central force that this campaign will be built on. An important step in building this movement in the working class involves mobilising media workers and journalists. As part of this process we are asking Australian and international journalists and media workers to demand that the MEAA (the Australian media union) speak out in defence of Julian Assange.

A concerted and sustained effort however will need to be made to mobilise media workers on this issue in the face of the (Australian Labor Party-aligned) MEAA's current betrayal of Julian.



[@WikiLeaks](#) has taken the 2011 Walkley
for Outstanding Contribution to
Journalism [#butyoualreadyknewthat](#)
[#wikileaks](#) [#walkleyleaks](#) [#walkleys](#)

10 hours ago via web

The MEAA have abandoned their vocal supporting of Julian from 2010 when they gave him a life-time membership as recognition of his contributions to the media. Since welcoming Wikileaks winning the Walkley Award for “Most outstanding contribution to the media” in 2011 the MEAA has not uttered any public support for Julian Assange and Wikileaks.



In 2017, the MEAA launched a campaign to defend Press Freedom stating: “Campaigning for press freedom, for the right of journalists to go about their business without harassment, persecution or censorship, is at the very core of the work of MEAA.” – however, the campaign made no mention of Julian Assange or Wikileaks.

On February 11th, in an important development in building the campaign to Free Julian Assange in the international working class, the San Francisco Labor Council passed a “[Resolution in Support of the Defense of Whistleblower & Journalist Julian Assange](#)”. The San Francisco Labor Council is affiliated with the AFL-CIO and represents over one hundred thousand workers in over 150 Unions. A new motion by the MEAA would add to the momentum to spread this development further. We encourage all media workers to not only organise around World Press Freedom Day to highlight the defence of Assange but also to pass

motions in their sub-branch meetings and workplaces in defence of Assange and Press Freedom.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE FIGHT TO DEFEND ASSANGE

THE DEEPENING CRISIS OF CAPITALISM

The defence of Julian Assange occurs within a broader political and class context. His persecution is part of the increasing use of the espionage act to silence dissent in the U.S. which began under the Obama Presidency but has intensified and broadened with the growing attacks and atmosphere of hostility to the press led by Trump who has labelled the media – “enemies of the people”. However, attacks on freedom of the press in the name of ‘national security’ are also occurring in Australia and many other countries around the world.

This, is because in the context of a deepening capitalist crisis, under conditions of ever-increasing social inequality, continuing capitalist rule is no longer consistent with a free press and freedom of speech. Wikileaks in its exposure highlights the broader trend, that the working class can no longer be allowed to learn about the crimes of governments for fear of the social revolution that this will ferment. The Trump administration is an extreme manifestation of this lurch towards authoritarianism and fascism and his government’s war on the press and Wikileaks must be seen in this context.

A UNITED FRONT TO DEFEND ASSANGE

As the attacks on Wikileaks, Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning are being driven by the crisis of capitalism, classconscious.org believes that the only force that can counter this process is an independent movement of the working class and youth – fighting for socialism. It is only this force that can lead the struggle to defend democratic and social rights.

However, classconscious.org is also aware that not everyone who wishes to fight for Julian is a socialist. We are prepared to work with principled non-socialist individuals and groups who wish to join this vital fight to defend the democratic and social rights of the international working class.

It is important to note that this United Front however does not include every individual who claims to support Julian Assange. Classconscious.org has been critical of the inclusion of far right, pro-Trump ‘independent journalists’ within specific platforms within the Defend Assange Campaign such as the #Unity4J vigils. We maintain that their inclusion is inappropriate as it divorces the fight to defend Julian from the broader fight against authoritarianism and fascism. We are not prepared to work with such forces who on the one hand claim to defend Julian but then use their media platforms to promote the fascist agenda of the Trump Administration.

For more information about the campaign visit [the website of independent journalist Llama](#).