

We demand Julian Assange's freedom

La Via Campesina, on the occasion of its 8th international conference in Bogota, Colombia, demands the immediate release of journalist and Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, who has been held in London for over 4 years, pending a decision on his extradition to the United States.

If the extradition order is carried out, Julian Assange will stand trial on conspiracy and 17 counts of espionage, which could see him sentenced to up to 175 years in prison for disclosing information of public interest, including human rights abuses and war crimes committed by the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A possible conviction of Assange would set an extremely dangerous precedent for the necessary protection that states must afford journalists, social communicators and whistle-blowers. It would also undermine the right to information and communication as constituent elements of the democratic system. However, the hegemonic press has, for the most part, joined the smear campaign against Assange.

The UN inspector for torture, Nils Melzer, acknowledged that Mr. Assange faced serious and systematic violations of the rights of the defense, judicial bias, collusion and manipulation of evidence. He has been the victim of constant surveillance, defamation and threats, and medical evidence shows that he has suffered prolonged psychological torture. And all this despite the fact that no charges have been brought against Assange in the UK to justify his detention.

It is not a crime to reveal facts for which governments should be held accountable. Julian Assange must be released immediately!

**8th International Conference of La Via Campesina
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