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By Kevin Reed
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Mexican president calls for Julian Assange's freedom

Speaking at a press conference in Mexico City on Friday morning, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador called for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to be “pardoned and freed” from prison in Britain. Lopez Obrador called for an end to the “torture” of Assange.



Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (Source: Wikipedia Commons)

In response to a question from a reporter about Assange during a scheduled government media briefing conference, the Mexican president said the secret US cables published by WikiLeaks about unlawful US interventions in Mexico were “accurate.”

“There are cables that came to light from when we were in opposition and they spoke about our struggle and I can corroborate that they are true, that is to say what is in them

was accurate. They revealed illegal relationships, illegitimate acts, violations of sovereignty, contrary to democracy, against freedoms. This is what is in there.”

Speaking of Assange, Obrador stated: “I don’t know whether he has recognized that his actions were confrontational to norms or to the political system, but what the cables demonstrated is the workings of the global system and its authoritarian nature. These are like state secrets that have become known thanks to this investigation, thanks to these cables, and I hope that this is taken into consideration and he is freed and he is no longer tortured.”

Assange is currently being held in a UK prison outside London awaiting a hearing, scheduled for February 24, on an extradition request from the US that the WikiLeaks founder be handed over to face violations of the Espionage Act. Assange has been charged with 18 offenses that carry a sentence of up to 175 years in prison.

Assange is guilty of nothing other than acting as a courageous journalist. He published extensive information that had been concealed from the public about the criminal practices of the US military and American corporations in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world.

Lopez Obrador’s reference to WikiLeaks’ publication of “the cables,” i.e. the Iraq and Afghanistan War Logs and the “Cablegate” files, as exposing the “workings of the global system” and “its authoritarian nature” are significant. There have been reports of public support in Mexico for the freedom of Assange.

In 2012, for example, a report was published in the *Economic Times* saying that a group of Mexican citizens had organized a vigil in defense of Assange in front of the US embassy. Dozens of people were involved in the campaign, which also included multiple embassies in Mexico.

The WikiLeaks founder was arrested on April 11 by British police following his forced eviction from the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he had been in asylum for seven years. The regime of Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno illegally terminated Assange’s asylum status and invited the British police into the embassy to assault and carry him off to Her Majesty’s Prison Belmarsh on the basis of a purported bail violation.

Acting as a vassal of the Trump administration, the Moreno government participated—along with that of UK Prime Minister Theresa May and then Boris Johnson—in the violation of Assange’s rights, one after another. Among these was the installation of illegal 24/7 video surveillance throughout the Ecuadorian embassy. Everything that Assange did

and everyone he met with—including his lawyers and doctors—was monitored and observed by the CIA via live video link.

Lopez Obrador's reference to torture is also important. Over the past year, Assange's family, friends and supporters have grown increasingly alarmed that the courageous journalist is being slowly tortured to death by the combined assault on his rights by the British and American governments.

On November 4, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer issued a warning that Assange was being mentally and physically tortured in Belmarsh prison and was in imminent danger of dying behind bars. Others, such as British rock musician Roger Waters, have stated that the UK and US governments are trying to kill Assange while he is in prison.

The international campaign to demand the freedom of Julian Assange must be stepped up now. If Assange is extradited to the US in February, he will not get a fair trial or face an impartial judge or jury. He will be framed and railroaded straight into a US federal prison.

The fact that the president of Mexico is calling for Assange to be released indicates that the popular demand for his freedom is continuing to reach a wider audience. The struggle for freedom of the press, in defense of journalists from state repression and all fundamental democratic rights, is the task of the international working class.

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