



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER TAKIN' FRENCH LEAVE...

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SLUNG OUT ON YER FRONTIER

SCHNEWS ASKS YOU AND WHOSE GENDARMERIE? AS FRENCH COPS CRACKDOWN ON MIGRANT WELFARE CENTRE

On Sunday afternoon French riot police smashed their way in to the recently opened migrant solidarity centre in a Calais warehouse (see SchNEWS 708), arresting the activists inside and trashing the migrants' possessions. Several activists were injured in the raid while outside the centre, police beat migrants with batons.

Following the closure of a night shelter offering temporary respite to migrants from the freezing conditions, they were again at the mercy of the French CRS riot cops' destructive frenzy (see SchNEWS 707). The night shelter had been opening sporadically when temperatures dropped below the requisite -2C but closed down last week.

Two solidarity groups, No Borders and SoS - Soutien aux Sans-papiers - last week legally rented an empty hangar in Calais to create an activist and migrant space.

According to Marie Chautemps, "The Kronstadt Hangar was opened as a direct challenge to the winter of repression that the migrants in Calais have faced since their 'jungle' communities were destroyed in a cruel PR stunt, back in September (see SchNEWS 692). With the authorities blocking any attempts to create a place for migrants to shelter from constant police harassment, or from the bitterly cold winter, the Kronstadt Hangar was set up in the name of common human respect as well as resistance to an increasingly fascist EU border policy."

BESSON AND ON

The French authorities were never going to put up with such a visible display of solidarity, however legally acquired, and ordered an illegal eviction. Before the eviction of the 'jungle' last September, French immigration minister Besson had vowed to make Calais an immigrant free zone by the end of the year. Despite missing this target, the numbers of migrants dropped from around 1,500 to a few hundred over the winter. Under pressure from the UK authorities to keep migrants away from channel ports, there was no let up on harassment and property destruction by his CRS henchmen. It is the policies of the same UK authorities and their French NATO allies in Afghanistan that many of these migrants are fleeing from.

However, until Saturday the police had

only kept a close eye on the centre, threatening to arrest any migrants who entered. Migrants weren't told about the hangar until Saturday evening when around 100 from Afghanistan, Iran, Kurdistan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia came. Defying the police blockade on the street outside, the migrants started chanting, "Freedom! Freedom!" and pushed against the police line. With activists from the inside joining in, a path was created for the migrants to run into the hangar.

Those inside agreed on the collective nature of the organisation of the space through daily meetings and immediately set to translating a statement about the hangar into the languages of all users. Despite a police siege, the mood was upbeat on Saturday night with people chatting, listening to folk music, drinking tea, writing and drawing. Tea, blankets, sleeping bags, basic mattresses were provided and a safe, secure, although chilly night was had by all.

HANGARS ON

When the migrants tried to return from receiving food the following day, police prevented them from re-entering. As numbers began to dwindle, more and more police arrived and the remaining migrants were told to leave or be arrested. All left the hangar but remained nearby shouting "You fought for us, we'll fight for you!". With the media kept well away from the hangar, the police smashed their way in with a battering ram and arrested around 12 activists.

The CRS then roamed the streets chasing and arresting migrants, while others managed to get away as activists hindered their efforts with decoys. The activists arrested were later released, only allowed to return to the centre to collect their belongings. Migrant's possessions had been stolen along with activists' equipment such as camera film, phones, house keys and bank cards. The doors were welded shut.

The police repression couldn't extinguish the links that had been forged between solidarity activists and migrants who actively participated in and appreciated attempts to create a common space. This latest initiative shows how difficulties like language barriers and the high turnover of activists and migrants can be overcome to increase resistance to the racist border regime..

*For more see www.calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com

CARMEL AGREXCO : SLAY IT WITH FLOWERS

Last Sunday (8th), two teams of activists blockaded the gates of Cargoflora and Carmel Agrexco in protest at the importation of flowers from occupied Palestine. Several of the blockaders were severely assaulted by staff at the Cargoflora depot.

One activist said, "We got there at around 5.30, and by 6 we had ten people locked on with D-Locks, superglue and Harris fencing panels - the security guard was asleep in his caravan the whole time".

Over at Carmel workers didn't do much except wait for the police - maybe Carmel have just got used to these interventions.

At Cargoflora it was a different story; workers yanked at D-Locks and tried to intimidate activists. Eventually the police did show up but they refused to intervene as the staff wrenched one gate open, even using a fork lift truck to force out one blockader, still locked to the gate leading out to the road. Supporters rushed over to the other gate to prevent more of the same, and after tussles with the boltcopper-wielding staff they were dragged away by police.

Eventually the activists, point made, unlocked themselves. Both of the protesters on the second gate required hospital treatment. Meanwhile the Met's finest stopped 'n' searched all of the two's supporters. As has become traditional at Carmel protests, no-one was arrested - clearly Cargoflora are just as worried as Carmel about subjecting the origin of their products to the court process.

With Valentine's day looming (not that you needed reminding, right?) Israeli companies are set to make a fortune out of the romantically guilt-ridden British public. Amazingly many of those red roses and blue violets on sale in the florists are actually coming out of the besieged Gaza Strip. The relentless Israeli blockade of Palestinian products has been specially eased up during this period. Around 450,000 flowers are passing through the Gaza crossings each week, bound for the UK, Holland and other parts of Europe. Carmel Agrexco's flowers are also sourced from the occupied West Bank.

In previous years, Carmel-Agrexco's UK headquarters in Hayes, Middlesex, was the site of angry protests on Valentine's Day, (see SchNEWS 699) with campaigners calling for a boycott of Israeli flowers and other goods. SchNEWS has learned (off of Corporate Watch) that Cargoflora, which has premises around the corner from Agrexco's depot, has in previous years provided freight services for Carmel-Agrexco flowers over the Valentine's period.

*see www.corporatewatch.org and www.bigcampaign.org

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I-RAN AWAY

As opposition protesters clashed with security forces in Iran yesterday (11th) on the anniversary of the 1979 revolution, a campaigner against the regime is entering the fourth week of her hunger strike in a desperate attempt to avoid deportation from Britain. If she returns to Iran she faces almost certain execution.

Bitā Ghaedi, 24, of Whetstone, London, has been refused an asylum application by British Immigration authorities and placed on a fast track scheme by the UK Border Agency, which means she may be deported at any time.

Having fled from Iran after two decades of beatings and mental torture at the hands of her family and former lover, she arrived in the UK only to be arrested and incarcerated for 45 days in Holloway prison and then held at Yarl's Wood detention centre whilst UK authorities assessed her claim.

Bitā said, "I feel my life is going to be finished. I'm so scared. I can't sleep during the night, I think immigration will come any time and take me away. It's better for me to die here."

Afraid that she will be hunted down by her family and killed upon her return, she now also faces torture and execution at the hands of the state for her involvement in the demonstrations against the Iranian regime last year.

Since her release from Yarl's Wood she has campaigned endlessly for regime change in Iran, a country where she says women are "treated like slaves".

During the crisis in Ashraf City in Iraq last year - where Iraqi security forces attacked an Iranian encampment and killed 11 people in their attempt to force them back to Iran for execution - a solidarity campaign lasting 72 days erupted all around the world, calling for the release of the 36 key members arrested.

Ghaedi campaigned outside both Downing St and the US embassy and went on hunger strike in protest. The 36 were eventually released no thanks to the US authorities who refused to intervene. No surprises there.

Campaigns like these, organised by the National Council for the Resistance of Iran (NCRI) and the Peoples Mujahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI) have put her in direct confrontation with the Mullahs of Iran. Her Iranian boyfriend, Moshen Zadshir, is also known for his work as a long-time opponent of the clerical regime and spent 12 years in prison for his views.

As the Iranian mullahs wrestle to gain control of its citizens, those active against the religious regime have been officially declared 'mohareb', which literally means 'enemies of God', an offence punishable by death. Public executions have been taking place to uphold the 'velayat-e faqih' (absolute rule of the clergy) by violent force.

As Ahmad Jannati, secretary of the 'guardian council' of the regime, said, "Rioters [and] advocates of corruption on earth...those who try to shatter the structure [of the regime]... must not be treated with compassion. It is now time for toughness".

Despite this, the end of 2009 saw Iranians rising up against the fraudulent re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and yesterday, opposition was evident on the streets of the capital as protestors and police violently clashed.

Ghaedi now faces deportation to a country actively searching for activists to make an example of. Sign the petition to stop her deportation today.

*see www.gopetition.co.uk/online/33778.html

SERCO-IMPLICIT

Around 70 women migrants on hunger strike against their treatment at Yarl's Wood detention centre are being supported by a solidarity hunger strike by students and campaigners.

The women began the hunger strike last Thursday (4th), calling for an end to detention and appealing to the UK Border Agency to allow enough time and resources for residents to present their cases.

On Monday (8th) guards broke the protest up violently, locking most of the women in a corridor for around eight hours without access to food, water or medical care. Even after some women started to collapse they refused to help, preferring instead to stand around laughing at the sight of desperate woman having to urinate on the corridor floor. There are reports that 20 women who climbed out of a window were beaten and held in isolation. One of the hunger strikers said, "Many guards behave like we are in prison. They should go to the army, this place is not for them."

After the hunger strikers were removed to their wings, the Home Office tried to falsely claim the strike had ended. As calls from the strikers flooded in contradicting the claim, four of the women were taken to Bedfordshire police station before being removed to Colnbrook short term holding centre.

Yarl's Wood is run by private firm Serco. Jane Peder, a campaigner against Yarls Wood, said, "Serco is running Yarl's Wood as a business at the cost of women and families who come to the UK to ask for protection. Serco staff are acting as front-line immigration staff - they clearly overstepped their capacities and need to be held accountable for their actions against the women."

The campaigners began their hunger strike outside Serco's London offices on Wednesday (10th) morning ahead of a planned solidarity demo at 2.30pm today (12th).

*For further info contact noborderslondon@riseup.net

COLD TURKEY

Nineteen Turkish anti-militarist activists will be put on trial on February 15th for "alienating people from military service" and "praising a crime and criminals". The case originates from a solidarity demo held for Enver Aydemir, a conscientious objector held in prison since December 24th.

The thirty members of the mostly anarchist anti-militarist group The Freedom Initiative for Anti-Militarist Prisoners were trying to make a public statement about Enver's imprisonment. But the moment they began to read their statements they were surrounded by 100 riot police. After taking a bit of a kicking, twenty three of them were nicked. Twenty two of them were later released but one man, Volkan Seving, has been remanded, allegedly for possession of a pen-knife.

They were held in custody for 24 hours without sleep before being dragged before the courts and charged. National Service is compulsory in Turkey for all men and the state does not recognise any right to conscientious objection.

War Resisters International are urging people to fax Military Prosecutor of Bilecik, who is in charge of Enver Aydemir's case. The fax number is +90-222-2375928

*see www.wri-irg.org/node/9483
www.ahalgazetesi.org/makale/the-trial-of-the-19-anti-militarists-for-alienating-people-from-military-service-will-be-held-on-february-15th/

WEST BANK STORY

The Israeli Army have stepped up their campaign against activists showing solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank. On Sunday, IDF units raided a flat in Ramallah used by activists from the International Solidarity Movement. Ariadna Jove Marti from Spain and Bridgette Chappelle from Australia were arrested by the army and handed over to immigration authorities.

After protests from Spain's foreign ministry, the two were released when the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that the two's arrest was illegal as Israeli immigration authorities have no jurisdiction in the area.

Cohen and Shatz said the arrests were part of Israel's campaign to choke off the weekly demonstrations by Palestinians, left-wing Israelis and foreign activists against the separation barrier.

*see www.palsolidarity.org

FLYING IN THE FACE

People across the country whose homes are threatened by airport expansion joined forces last weekend. Residents of Hasty Lane in Manchester, a row of 200 year-old cottages slated for demolition to make way for a giant cargo shed for nearby Manchester Airport, threw a Tea-party to launch their 'adopt a resident' scheme. They were joined via video link by inhabitants of Sipson, the village threatened with destruction by the building of Heathrow's third runway.

*see: <http://www.planestupid.com/resident>

SUS-SEX APPEAL

Over 100 students occupied a top floor conference centre at Sussex University after weeks of campaigning against redundancies and cuts.

The students stormed the building on Monday (8th) afternoon, forcing management to shut down the entire floor of the building.

The students occupied the centre for a day before leaving of their own accord on Tuesday (9th) night.

...and finally...

The English Defence League have cancelled their planned swagger through Bolton after organisers uncovered a dastardly 'black-ops' plot by antifascists to disguise themselves as EDLers and attack the Asian community.

Yes, those mild mannered trots the UAF - normally too polite to ask a police kettle if they wouldn't mind awfully letting them walk up the street, just a little, it's just that there's going to be a nice speech and we'd really love to hear it - were apparently planning to shave their heads, don Burberry caps and Ben Sherman shirts and go Paki bashing. According to an EDL statement, the unholy scheme was hatched in "a desperate attempt to falsely accuse us of being racist".

The opportunistic lefties were supposedly planning to take advantage of the fact that the march was scheduled for the same day as a Hindu religious festival. The EDL statement said the march was cancelled out of their "respect for the peace-loving Hindu community". Of course, they are absolutely right, the vast majority of Hindus are peaceful and reasonable people and it's only a tiny minority that are violent extremists committing atrocities in the name of a fundamentalist religious belief.

Er, so where have the EDL have heard that argument before?

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