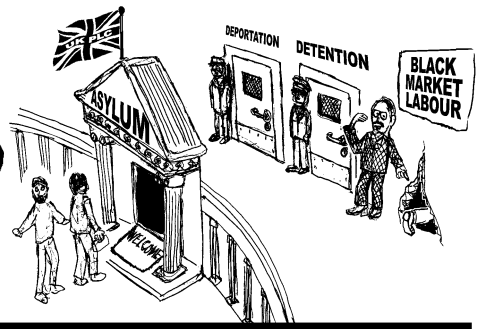




WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!! IT'S YER NO FLY ZONE

SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk



Friday 2nd December 2005

Free/Donation

Issue 523

AMIR - ACLE

“Brighton’s first ever anti-deportation campaign, fought by Amir’s friends and supporters from grassroots groups!! We did it!” - Friends of Amir

One in the eye for the Home Office last week as a swift intervention by Brighton campaigners prevented the deportation of an asylum seeker.

Amir Hassan, an Iranian web journalist, was arrested in a dawn raid on November 15th by Police and Immigration Officers, after the failure of his initial asylum application. He was served deportation papers and taken to Colnbrook, the brand new privatised detention centre near Heathrow.

Amir has been in Brighton for a year and in that time has made many friends and connections. As soon as he was arrested a campaign started. Over thirty people attended the first meeting. “Friends of Amir” includes supporters from the Migrant English Project, where Amir was studying, and the Brighton & Hove Unemployed Worker’s Centre.

A campaigner for Friends of Amir told SchNEWS, “The Home Office illegally abused Amir’s rights. They totally ignored the evidence which showed that Amir would be imprisoned on his return to Iran. They claimed that deportation papers had been served on Amir and his solicitor five days before his arrest. This was totally untrue on both counts.”

The Home Office refused to believe that Amir faced persecution in Iran despite evidence showing that one person was sentenced to six months imprisonment simply for helping him to escape. Amir’s case exposes the hypocrisy of Neo Labour which condemns the regime in Iran on the one hand and then happily returns those who flees its clutches back to the claws of that very same regime.

Journalism in Iran is a risky business, especially for using the Internet to disseminate news the regime doesn’t like. This October, an article from Reporters Without Borders (RWB) reported that 20 European news agencies had protested the arrest of 5 Iranian journalists, all of whom had been savagely tortured and whipped with electric cables before being paraded on television to announce that their jailors had been as ‘gentle as kittens.’ Since the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as President in June 2005, repression of journalists and web bloggers has increased. RWB also details how the Iranian regime is intensifying its attempts to control the Internet and using a private company to develop sophis-

ticated software to ban unapproved sites. Those who seek to find ways around these bans are the subject of fierce persecution.

Amir ran the first private Internet company and web service in Iran. When the State decided to clamp down on Internet use and confiscate his company’s equipment, Amir protested; the result was his arrest on two occasions and an assault by a state employee and threats to his life.

In December 2004 Amir sought refuge in Britain. Once in the UK, the Home Office denied Amir protection at his asylum hearing despite him being wanted in Iran and in grave danger of being incarcerated for his activities as a liberal journalist. Given that the use of torture, execution and maiming are common in the Iranian judicial system, especially when the offence is deemed political, his life is in real danger.

LUNATIC ASYLUM

Campaigners got Amir decent legal representation and petitioned his MP Celia Barlow. She contacted the Home Office and secured a three day stay while the case was reviewed. Despite this, an attempt was made to deport Amir at 4.00 am on Thursday 17th November. This was prevented only by the intervention of one of his neighbours, a teacher at Brighton & Hove City College, who drove to Heathrow in the middle of the night to intervene and literally thrust the relevant papers on the Immigration Service. In a letter to supporters Celia Barlow said, “Either intentionally or unintentionally I have been misled by the Home Office...” Another honest mistake from the Home Office then.

Pressure was sustained with pickets outside the Home Office as Amir was shuttled between three detention centres, eventually arriving at Dungavel in Scotland last Saturday. Finally on Tuesday 29th, Amir was released without bail until his second application for asylum is considered. He still faces the legal battle for refugee sta-

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For being sustainable!

When eco-activists in California started setting fire to SUV’s in car showrooms across the state, the FBI knew where to look...at the Regenerative Cooperative hippy commune.

Basing their suspicions solely on the fact that he is vegan, lives communally, uses solar panels and drives an electric car, the FBI followed Josh Connole around for several days.

When Josh realised he was being stalked he went to the local police for help, but was instead busted by the Feds and interrogated for four days. As the FBI were prodding him to confess, a letter claiming responsibility for the actions appeared in the LA Times. The letter also mocked the FBI for getting the wrong man.

All that happened two years ago but the cops have finally come clean and the last laugh is with Josh, who recently received a “letter of regret” from the FBI (Rarer than George W. chowing down on a tofu burger!) and a whopping cheque for \$100,000. He plans to purchase an electric Hummer.

tus, is still at risk of being detained and deported, but is at least back in Brighton with his friends and supporters.

A spokesman told SchNEWS, “The campaign’s been a great success and we’ve rocked the Home Office. This man was two hours from being put on a plane to Tehran; literally hundreds of emails, faxes and phone calls to the Home Office have prevented that.”

Of course Amir’s case is the exception. In fact it’s virtually unprecedented. Most people tangled up in the asylum system don’t have a fraction of the resources and time that was devoted to Amir’s case by volunteers. And the system just got tougher, with massive cuts in legal aid. Amir was unable to get legal aid to appeal the refusal of his first asylum application. Cases have been significantly speeded up of late and there are less grounds for appeal. Once an asylum seeker has lost their application they lose all right to financial support and are forced to live on charitable donations.

* Know someone in a similar situation? Get hold of **A self-help guide against detention and deportation – For asylum seekers and their supporters**. To order email booksvideos@crossroadswomen.net or contact National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns tel: 0121 554 6947 www.ncadc.org.uk

* **Sarah Hatah** and her five children were deported back to Uganda on 26th October, despite medical evidence proving she suffered torture in Uganda (SchNEWS 520). Thanks to a campaign by the Wigan Community Action Party, the council have a special meeting about the treatment of Sarah and other refugees. There’s a rally at the Wigan Town Hall, Library St., in support of her at 5.15pm, 7th Dec.

The **Migrant English Project** provides a welcoming social space and English lessons in Brighton. It was set up two years ago to make links with all migrants in the area and keep track of their situations – if it wasn’t for the project, Amir would likely be back in Iran. Unlike many other voluntary groups the project won’t accept government funding that would dictate who they can and can’t support and what they can do politically.
* Weekly Mondays 1-4pm at Cowley Club, 12 London Rd Brighton.
* www.migrantenglishproject.org

SchNEWS 11th BIRTHDAY PARTY

This Saturday (Dec 3rd) Cowley Club, 12 London Rd., Brighton, 8- 12 midnight
* Our mates DJing * Free/Donation * Cowley Club members and guests welcome

FALLEN SAINTS

On Tuesday, St Agnes Place, Kennington - the oldest squatted street in London - was evicted by bailiffs and hundreds of riot police. On Wednesday the area including the park was still cordoned off, and it is believed demolition was taking place. Supporters turned up, but there was very little they could do due to the sheer scale of the police operation. A wake for the death of St Agnes Street was held at Lambeth Town Hall in the afternoon. The eviction took a full twelve hours with the last few remaining residents brutally beaten by the cops, resulting in one losing consciousness and being taken away by ambulance.

Police also evicted the Pirate TV bus, despite being unable to find anything wrong with the paperwork or the bus, except that it couldn't start. The cops instructed it be towed away but luckily the boys from the recovery firm managed to get it going and save it from the police compound.

Not content with evicting a whole street, police and bailiffs then evicted a squat in nearby Bolton Crescent, despite the fact the court case for the eviction was not due to be held till 16th December, making the eviction illegal: nice to see the boys in blue upholding the law.

There was predictably little mainstream coverage of the eviction, and the journals around were "embedded" with the police, and only shown what the police chose to show. The eviction marks the ends of the thirty year old vibrant community and leaves 150 people homeless with winter already here. It will instead be replaced by a soulless estate and a sports centre. It is reckoned that "unpaid rent" on the properties amounted to £4m over the years and that, according to Lambeth Council, they were "paying nothing to the community" - as if paying rent for your home to some landlord was more important than actually being a thriving community not based on capitalist exploitation. www.stagnesplace.net

HACKNEYED CLICHE

And to another London council desperate to flog off as much land as possible to developers eager to build more blocks of trendy overpriced flats, upmarket delis and another desperately needed Starbucks. This time it's Hackney, where the council's 'Property Disposal Programme' has been in full flow for a while - nine properties were sold as a job lot to developer Stirling & Investments Ltd for a laughable £250,000.

The Broadway market has been one of the main targets, but fed up locals have now united to form some timely resistance. Since Nov 28th, people have occupied number 34, successfully repelling the first wave of demolition workers.

The building they're defending was formally called Francesca's café. Run by Tony Platia for a mere thirty years, he became a popular local figure in the process - and all the time paid up his council rent. The reason it's not still a café is because, as the pressure grew against the compulsorily auctioning of the building, it was er, mysteriously firebombed. The auction proceeded but Mr Platia refused to leave, despite bailiffs making menacing noises. Local support has managed to hold them off so far, but more help is needed to continue the occupation. Get down there if you can and join the struggle. For more about it and the glorious history of Hackney Borough Council, see www.redpepper.org.uk/natarch/x-inv-nov2002.html

* A court date for the eviction has been set for the 9th Dec at Shoreditch County Court.

Smash EDO MASS DEMO
Stop The Arms Trade - Defend The
Right To Protest
10th December 12pm Churchill Square,
Brighton. www.smashedo.org.uk

Inside SchNEWS

Distributing information can be a dangerous business... **Fatih Tas**, owner of Kurdish Aram Publishing House in Turkey faces over six years in prison if he is not acquitted at his next trial which starts today. He's being persecuted for having published a Turkish translation of a book by John Tirman, director of international studies at MIT, called "Spoils of War: Human Cost of America's Arms Trade". In it, Tirman criticizes US policy for having militarized countries, including Turkey, in the Persian Gulf region by selling them weapons and thus preventing them from carrying on with domestic democratic reforms. Military solutions were sought for every problem, ultimately leading to some of the worst atrocities of the 1990s as hundreds of thousands of Kurds were displaced and ill treated by Turkish security forces, in brutal operations accompanied by torture and "disappearance" during the conflict with the PKK. We can't imagine why the Turkish authorities are so keen to snuff out these inflammatory allegations with their sledgehammer tactics... unless, well, they're true or something. Michael Albert, Noam Chomsky and John Pilger have all called for people to register their demands for freedom of speech and support for Fatih Tas by participating in the petition campaign at www.aramyayincilik.org

* **Mehmet Tarhan** was arrested in Turkey in April this year for being a conscientious objector. Tarhan is also gay and an anarchist and faced torture in the military prison. His struggle is widely supported by anarchists and anti-militarists in Turkey and abroad. 9th December is International Day of Prisoners for Peace and there are demonstrations for Tarhan in Frankfurt, Berlin, Mainz, Münster, London, Paris, Belgrade, New York and elsewhere. The picket in London will be organized by "Wages Due Lesbians" and "Payday", in front of Turkish Airlines, 125 Pall Mall / corner of Haymarket St., 12-2pm. www.refusingtokill.net

* For more about Turkey's poor past record, see Human Rights Watch www.hrw.org

CHEMICAL IMBALANCE

December 3rd is the 21st anniversary of the worst industrial disaster in history - the **1984 Union Carbide chemical plant accident in Bhopal, India** - current death toll 20,000, with over half a million injured. The damage was done by a 40-ton heavier-than-air cloud of lethal methyl isocyanate which poured through the town, and the since-abandoned plant has never been cleaned up. Union Carbide - now swallowed up by Dow Chemicals - got away with paying \$500m for damages, and the then CEO of Union Carbide, Warren Anderson, was declared a fugitive by the Chief Magistrate of Bhopal for failing to appear as chief defendant in a homicide case. To this day Anderson is still 'on the run' - the FBI claim they can't find him - yet his address is public knowledge.

Enter a second fugitive into the equation: Texan environmentalist Diane Wilson who in 2002 chained herself to a 70 foot tower at a Dow Chemicals plant in Seadrift Texas and hung a banner reading "Dow Responsible for Bhopal". She was sentenced to four months in prison but is refusing to serve the time until 'ol Warren is extradited to Bhopal to face manslaughter charges. She is currently on a national tour of campuses raising awareness about Dow Chemicals - being careful not to set foot in Texas - and even popped in at Wozza's pad on Long Island to find him alive and well and mowing the lawn!

As if a reminder is needed, just a week ago 3.8 million in Harbin, China, lost their drinking water as 100 tons of cancerous benzene spilled from a chemical plant into the Songhua River - the disaster will also affect around 70 Russian towns as the 50 mile slick of benzene heads downriver. Happy anniversary Bhopal survivors.

* See also www.bhopal.net

PROTEST MOP UP

December 3rd is the **International Day of Climate Protest** and also falls midway through the "MOP" (First 'Meeting of Parties' to the Kyoto Protocol) Climate Talks in Montreal. There will be demos around the world. In London, a critical mass will assemble at Thames Barrier 9.30 am, cycle around and then join up with main march, to assemble 12.00 pm at Lincoln's Inn Fields (Holborn Tube). The march will take in the dizzy sights of the corporate world before finding its way to Grosvenor Square and the US embassy. Speakers there at 2.30pm will include George Monbiot, Michael Meacher MP and Caroline Lucas MEP (Green Party). See www.campaigncc.org for more. For details of Edinburgh demo, contact Gavin Smith, Young Greens, 0796648536 or gavin_pms@hotmail.com. For Bangor demo in Wales see www.hebfinia.com

*A BRIDGE TOO FAR:

Protests went ahead against the **aviation industry's expansion conference** held at Tower Bridge last week (SchNEWS 522). A huge police presence made sure there was no inconvenience to fat cats as they met to stuff their faces on posh food, discuss how to build four more Heathrow sized airports by 2020 and continue to avoid any kind of tax on aviation fuel etc. A small critical mass made a couple of passes and attempted to generally get in the way, and a number of noisy demonstrators attempted to make their feelings known but the Bill were well prepared and, bizarrely, managed to cite an ancient bye-law to prevent anyone from stopping on the bridge - except in the small fenced off 'protest zone'. Another victory for Magna Carta Britain - but at least we'll all be able to fly round the world for a penny before we die. For more see www.road-alert.org.uk and www.earthfirst.org.uk

SchNEWS in brief

Leaf it aah! **Camp Bling**, the tree-top protest camp set up to prevent unnecessary, destructive road-building plans going ahead in Southend, Essex continues. (See SchNEWS 514, 519). Calling out for more help - see www.ppps.org.uk and get yourself down there. ** The **Norwich Alliance Against Urban 4x4s** will begin issuing 'parking tickets' detailing why the SUV is such a pisspoor choice of vehicle in Norwich city centre today. Join the campaign at www.stopurban4x4s.org.uk and download or order spoof tickets from www.wastemonsters.org.uk ** Saturday (3rd) is the **Manchester Anarchist Bookfair** noon-5pm, The Basement, 24 Lever Street, Manchester. www.radicalbookfair.org ** The tragicomedy play about human shields in the Iraq War, **"Into The War Zone"**, is on in Leeds, 16th and 17th (8pm), Carriageworks Theatre, Millenium Square. £8/£5 call 0113 224 3801 to reserve a ticket.

...and finally...

Old pissheads with an encyclopaedic knowledge of a subject no one else cares about. How to spot the difference between beardy-weirdies Campaign For Real Ale and weirdy-beardies Campaign for Real Anarchism, a London Class War front group? Stickers have appeared in pubs up and down the country bearing a spoof Campaign For Real Ale (Camra) logo, but promoting a "Campaign For Real Anarchism" - effectively nicking their tankard for anarchist marketing purposes.

A bearded spokesbarrel, for Real Ale, quaffing a pint of Theakston's Old Battered Copper, said they won't be sending the lawyers in for breach of copyright, as there was "no point, as no self-respecting anarchist would recognise a capitalist court." Words of wisdom indeed.

A spokesbalaclava for Real Anarchism has offered to take the corduroyed CAMRA out for a pint to show no hard feelings - but apparently they can't find a pub that sells both Old Cripple Cock and Special Brew.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers to take their department seriously but still be prepared to slouch... Honest!

Subscribe! Get SchNEWS free every week by email in pdf or text file - visit our site, or send us stamps and we'll post it to you. Copy and distribute! Keep SchNEWS free with donations (via website or cheques payable to Justice?). Posted free to all prisoners. SchNEWS, P.O. Box 2600, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 0EF. Tel +44 (0)1273 685913 Email schnews@brighton.co.uk Web www.schnews.org.uk