

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER CRAWLEY-ING WITH COPS...

# SchNEWS

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## THINGS CAN ONLY GET BUDDHA

...AS SchNEWS EXAMINES THE SUDDEN INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

"I call on those who embrace the values of human rights and freedom to support the legitimate demands of the Burmese people." - *George Bush.*

Burma's people are on the streets. Simmering discontent with the military junta that keeps millions in poverty boiled over into saffron-clad streetrage this week. The biggest clashes since 1988 were sparked by a 500% rise in the price of fuel, which also sent the cost of foodstuffs soaring. The first march by students and monks on 19th August led to series of protests; a movement which has been confronted with countrywide curfews, tear gas and live fire. There is no doubting their courage but why the sudden outpouring of concern for human rights from the West's leaders? And why is it twenty years late?

Gordon gave us the answer in a comment piece in the Independent when he came to the heart of the matter - "Burma should be one of the most promising economies in south-east Asia. Instead, it is one of the poorest countries in the region."

Roughly translated - Burma's military junta just aren't very good at ensuring that enough of the country's natural wealth ends up in the hands of the western corporations. But recently, instead of opening the country up to western investment, the regime has become more friendly with regional superpower China. During the first seven months of this year, China-Burmese trade reached £600m up 40% compared to last year. So suddenly the West swings behind the idea of sanctions - maybe if the junta can be ousted then we could find more PR friendly people with whom we could do business.

The clashes in 1988 led to mass repression and the deaths of 3000, but extracted the promise of an election out of the junta. This was won outright two years later by the NLD, personified in the West by Aung San Suu Kyi who's been under house arrest for 11 years. Suu Kyi has achieved a Mandela-like status in the West in recent years, and Gordon demanded that any solution in Burma have her "at its heart". However her party has little control over the uprising. In fact they've been pleading from the sidelines for the gatherings not to become an excuse to topple the regime, preferring the adoption of sanctions by the international community to bring the junta to the negotiating table.

Burma solidarity campaigners have been screaming for sanctions for twenty years but

apart from an arms embargo, the EU has only issued 'guidance' on investment. The largest western investor is French oil conglomerate, Total. The UK follows with \$26m in trade but 'recommends' that the multinationals shouldn't increase trade with Burma. The EU - policing its guidelines - has confiscated a wallet-busting four grand. With such a brutal regime in power, it's also a little embarrassing when by 2000, the EU was responsible for almost three-quarters of all investment and nearly one third of those corporations doing business in the country had their headquarters based in Europe. Profits from foreign investment have helped double military spending at the same time the public health and education systems have crumbled. Outside investment is not the answer in Burma - it's the problem. What the west would like to see in Burma is a transition to 'democracy' of a wearily familiar market variety.

The question is: when the military junta eventually have to step away from government (although not necessarily power), will a free and newly elected Aung San Suu Kyi sign on the dotted line with the IMF and World Bank? And will there be a deal for Western support or will she think a little more carefully about the historical precedent and tell foreign investors where to shove it? Answers on a postcard to the usual address....

\* For more background about **Burma** see [www.burmacampaign.org.uk](http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk)

\* Read John Pilger's book '**Freedom Next Time**', about how corporate interests exert power over former authoritarian regimes - [www.johnpilger.com](http://www.johnpilger.com)

### PARTY & PROTEST

**SEPTEMBER - 28-30 - Animal Rights UK Gathering** on land owned by a farm animal sanctuary near Tonbridge, Kent. Talks, discussions and workshops related to animal rights campaigning. [www.veggies.org.uk/event.php?ref=1116](http://www.veggies.org.uk/event.php?ref=1116). \*\* **OCTOBER - 6 - Planning Meeting for 8th December Climate Demo**, St Marys Church, High Street, Oxford. 1-6pm. Free. See [www.campaigncc.org](http://www.campaigncc.org) \*\* **7 - 'Stop Bombing Afghanistan'** walk to mark the 6th anniversary of the 2001 invasion. 10am, St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, EC2N 4AG. Tel 0845 458 2564 or visit [www.voicesuk.org](http://www.voicesuk.org) \*\* **9 - Stop Deporting Cameroonians!** called by UK Cameroon Support Network (CSN). 12-2pm at UK Immigration Service, Sandford House, 41 Homer Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 3RJ [www.ncadc.org.uk](http://www.ncadc.org.uk)

"As a citizen I would not like to see that many people locked up. But as we're in the business, I'd like to play our part in it."



- Boardmember for Premier Prison Services

## GETTIN' ON ME GATWICK

Last week two hundred people gathered at the No-Borders camp for a long weekend of action against "Fortress Europe", focussing on the building of a new detention centre at Gatwick Airport.

The camp was moved at the last minute to Balcombe, East Sussex (see SchNEWS 603) and had a permanent police presence with cops at the gates photographing people coming and going. The camp was well organised with food provided communally, compost toilets, rubbish and recycling points, a kids space and lots of talks and discussions about immigration, borders and campaigning. People came from all over the world and shared their experiences of being a detainee and campaigning against border controls.

Actions started on Thursday evening with people handing out the "Gatwick X-press" paper in Crawley, outlining the reasons for resisting the building of a new detention centre. This innocuous leafletting attracted no less than five police photographers.

On Friday there were several actions: - **Virgin Holidays** had their **Crawley office** invaded by a dozen people. Virgin make money flying deported refugees, especially to Nigeria. The foyer was occupied and some protesters popped upstairs to the office, where staff were leafleted about their company's activities. Earlier in the month,

Continued overleaf...

### CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

#### For Filming a Police Photographer

On the Saturday **No Border** demo in Crawley an independent journalist who was covering the march was arrested by a police photographer. The photographer who couldn't take his own medicine was getting annoyed at being filmed by the journalist, but he lost the plot when he was asked if he photographed children. The officer said he was "distressed" by this comment and arrested the journalist. After a few hours in the cells the journalist was released without charge.

It's a fair question to ask whether the police take pictures of children, see the SchMovies film **Video Nasties** at [www.schnews.org.uk/schmovies/index.html](http://www.schnews.org.uk/schmovies/index.html)

#### For speaking truth to power.

Also on the No Border demo, one marcher was whisked away for a stay at Crawley custody for allegedly muttering the word 'wanker' under her breath. Seriously alarmed by this almost unprecedented outburst of foul language in the town's shopping centre, cops tried to get the potty-mouthed protestor to hand over her details for a potential ASBO when she refused it was one way trip to the nick. Luckily she's been bailed out of Sussex to prevent further offences so we needn't fear any more outbursts of profanity in the Garden County.

**INFORMATION FOR ACTION**

Copyleft  
Published in Brighton since 1994



**GETTIN' ON ME GATWICK continued...**

Crawley-based charter airline XL Airways said they would stop operating all deportation flights on behalf of the Home Office following a successful campaign, highlighted during the Camp for Climate Action.

- A larger group went to **Lunar House** and **Electric House** in **Croydon**; the offices of the Border and Immigration Agency where hundreds of people go everyday to make applications to stay. Their claims can be rejected immediately, so Lunar House has a holding facility "in order to speed up the processing of their asylum claims." Electric House is a reporting centre where asylum seekers have to sign-on (usually weekly) to fulfil "reporting obligations." They can be arrested on the spot and detained, with no contact with friends or family. Failure to attend can result in the being deported as well. Electric House also holds the snatch squads who raid people's houses in dawn raids.

At the Lunar House demo one asylum seeker was clearly in a distressed state, shouting "They are not human! I need help." In response cops threw him to the ground, handcuffed and arrested him. A witness to the arrest said "What this guy needed was some help, he possibly had mental health problems. But rather than assisting him the police brutally arrested him." Protesters went to Croydon police station to complain about the arrest but cops responded by nicking two more people for trying to hand in witness statements!

- In the evening **Group4's** offices were paid a visit, the front entrance blockaded and, as employees left by the back entrance they were asked to justify their work in making their com-

pany millions out of detaining asylum seekers at Dungalve in Scotland, and their role in deporting people back to countries where they face war, torture, prison and death. Group4 also make a tidy sum from tagging prisoners. Chief executive, Nick Buckles, wants tagging to be extended to all asylum seekers and this would be "one of the company's growth drivers going forward."

On **Saturday** as more than 300 people started marching from **Crawley Town Centre**, they were met with a mixture of support (and abuse from some ill-informed locals). Police presence on the demo was high and when the march reached Tinsley House Detention Centre protesters were herded into a small pen facing a fence, ditch, two lines of cops, police dogs and two high fences with razor wire. Phone contact was made with those inside and a small sound system was used so all present could hear detainees' plight. One man, who has been in detention for three months, is an asylum seeker from Angola. Having been in the UK for eleven years, he has a British wife and three children, yet is due to be deported to Angola after his asylum claim was rejected.

\* **Brighton No Borders** are meeting 6pm, Tuesday 9 October at the Cowley Club, London Road with feedback from the camp and a discussion for further action.

\* More information on **No Borders**: [www.noborders.org.uk](http://www.noborders.org.uk)

In **November** there will be a **No Borders Camp** on the **Mexico/USA border**. See [www.noborder-scamp.org](http://www.noborder-scamp.org) for more info.

\* A short video "**Virgin Flies You To Death**" of the action can be seen at: [www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2007/09/381667.html?c=on#c181302](http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2007/09/381667.html?c=on#c181302)

**DSEi Business**

Once again the arms dealers were in town for this year's **Defence Systems and Equipment International (DSEi)** which started on 11th September (see SchNEWS 602). It seemed obvious on the day before the fair was due to start that the Metropolitan Police were not going to allow protesters to gain much ground. 100 plus cops arrived to meet 30 protesters outside of the Mayfair hotel where delegates were having a pre- arms sales banquet. Individuals were stopped and searched for almost any reason, even for blowing a kiss to one officer!

On the opening day of the conference, a 17 strong group from Brighton and London breached security at the ExCel centre, running into the east car park at 7:45am - just before a press conference was due to start. Unfortunately the group didn't get very far with one protester telling SchNEWS how, within seconds, he was pushed to the tarmac by a sergeant from Met Riot team on their back. Taken to hospital with a newly glued together chin and some bruised ribs, he and others were eventually nicked following a series de-arrests and re-arrests until cops finally decided what crime had been committed.

The Space Hijackers managed to get a tank booming with music outside the main entrance of the ExCel centre. A 200 strong party caused a bit of a stir making sure that arms fair delegates didn't forget that their business is one which profits from innocent lives and illegal wars all the world around. Another 100 joined the CAAT rally, and around 50 cyclists embarked on critical mass, leading to a number of pointless arrests, as the Met attempted to assert authority, and justify their presence at the event.

"The police fabricated excuses to criminalise individuals who are willing to take stand against the wrongly legitimised arms trade", one protester told SchNEWS, "Our government profits from stealing the lives of too many people worldwide, while spending £3.5 million on oppressing its politically conscious public".

\* For more at [www.dsei.org](http://www.dsei.org)

**...and finally...**

Ultra patriotic Yankees in Oregon, no doubt trying to take their minds off the Iraq quagmire, have complained about the abuse of the Stars and Stripes. But it's not flag-burning, draft dodging, long-hairs this time though, it's terrorist dogs.

City officials in Hillsboro have painted a fire hydrant red white and blue with "Old Glory" in testament to the bravery of a four-footed member of the City Police Department - Hondo the police dog, who died in the line of duty. Unfortunately the rest of Hillsboro's canine population were less patriotic and started to use the hydrant as a territorial marker. With each cocked leg cocking a snook at the honour of the Home of the Brave it was time for god fearin' folks to take action.

"That gallant dog must be turning in his grave at the thought of the flag being desecrated every time a dog pees on that hydrant!" wrote Louanne Douris, a retired U.S. Foreign Service officer.

Parks officials swiftly placed the hydrant on an 18-inch-high base and surrounded it with prickly bushes.

Another hydrant (painted perhaps with the Iranian flag?) was placed at ground level for the dogs' convenience. Parks officials, monitoring the situation said there had been no reports of dogs urinating on the flag hydrant although reports of people taking the piss have increased since the hydrant was installed.

**Disclaimer**

SchNEWS warns all readers not to get up to any monk-ey business or else you'll get one up the junta. Honest!

**RETURN TO SENDER**

Members of a **Palestinian** delegation to Brighton went to the weekly **Smash EDO** noise demo on Wednesday (26th). Naveen from Tubas women's group and Mohammed from Tubas Red Crescent visited the Brighton factory to express their anger at the manufacture of weapons components used against their families in Palestine. They said they also wished to experience an English-style protest. Cops attempted to film them without asking permission and were prevented by some locals. After persistent negotiations the police stopped filming for the duration of the demonstration. Naveen said "It makes me angry to think of these people who have such easy lives thoughtlessly making weapons that are making the lives of my family and friends so hard and miserable." Mohammed commented "If they could see my ambulance being delayed at checkpoints while critically ill patients are dying I am sure they would think twice about making the weapons that support the military occupation of my homeland."

Tom Hayes, 38, of the Brighton-Tubas Friendship and Solidarity Group said "It is fantastic to be able to take these people on a demonstration here and to see they approve, because it shows we have the support of the people most directly affected by this company's merchandise of death."

\* **Smash EDO Noise Demos** continue each Wednesday, 4-6pm, at EDM MBM, Home Farm Rd, Brighton.

\* See also [www.smashedo.org.uk](http://www.smashedo.org.uk)

**KERRY ON REGARDLESS**

A seminar with John Kerry at the University of Florida went all Big Brother when a student asked one too many probing questions.

The Senator and ex-presidential hopeful was busy listening to student Andrew Meyer's questions when two cops moved in and dragged him away from the microphone after he asked if John Kerry was in the same secret society as George Bush! More cops arrived and escalated the arrest into a sloppy farce, eventually tazering the helpless Meyer as he lay pleading on the ground. Two cops were later taken off street duty and are under investigation.

The official reason given was that Meyer had gone over his one minute and was resisting arrest.

Get your stopwatch ready and judge for yourself at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IATPoHdpak0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IATPoHdpak0)

**FASLANE 365**

**October 1st is the Faslane365 Big Blockade.**

After a year of blockading Faslane nuclear base (see SchNEWS 562, 565, 568, 574, 581, 589 featuring the **Faslane365in365-o-meter**). For a grand finale there'll be a mass action to celebrate the campaign and shut down the base!! Be colourful and wear big smiles. Starts 6.30am, at the north and south gate of Faslane naval base. Tel 0845 45 88 365 Web [www.faslane365.org](http://www.faslane365.org)

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