

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER ROUGH JUSTICE...

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GAZA DEFENDANTS HAMMERED AS JUDGE-MENTAL DENNIS SENTENCES GAZA PROTESTERS.....

The state has begun handing down vicious sentences to men accused of participation in the rioting in London that occurred during the weeks of protest against the Israeli attacks on Gaza (see SchNEWS 661-662). Ten young men have been jailed for their role in protests demanding an end to Israel's invasion of Gaza early last year – and more are to follow in the coming weeks.

In total, 91 were arrested, the vast majority young Muslim men and in most cases long after the event. Altogether 73 have been charged with violent disorder following the demonstrations that took place over the three weeks of Operation Cast Lead. Fifty have already pleaded guilty amid accusations of police intimidation and denial of access to solicitors.

Ten have been sentenced so far, some for as long as 2 and a half years, despite recommendations for leniency by the probation service. Among those sentenced so far are two Palestinian men, one of whom had two cousins killed by the Israeli army during the offensive.

All but one were sentenced by the same judge (Judge Dennis) for the same reason, which he regurgitated in a carefully orchestrated speech. He said the custodial sentences showed “the public are entitled to look to the law... for a deterrent message”.

SchNEWS spoke to a monitor from the Legal Defence Monitoring Group who has been attending the trials.

“The Judge has committed the defendants to jail because he can- there were no obstacles placed in his or the State's way. Indeed, the judge indicated his participation in the state's project when he told all the defendants at the plea hearings that he had viewed all the evidence from police witnesses and independent (!) footage from Sky News and on that basis it would be best that they pleaded guilty - even before waiting to hear their defence!

“There were no obstacles to the police being able to conduct themselves in this way. There were no pre-planned counter surveillance teams like FIT Watch. Virtually none of the protesters brought kits to mask up. There were very few volunteers handing out bust cards detailing protesters' legal rights when threatened by police with violation of their liberty. There were no legal observers or parliamentary observers like at Climate Camp.

“If these had been available then the police would have found it more difficult during and after the protests. More people could have gone to the effort of submitting civil claims against the police for damages - a long and

arduous process no doubt - and submitted civil claims as evidence of the general conduct of police on the day.

“There is no doubt that many of those accused have received appalling legal advice – pleading guilty without even seeing the evidence against them. They were perhaps just throwing placard sticks at fully armoured police – not realistically threatening them.

“At least some defence QCs have tried to explain why the protests arose and the context. Unfortunately Judge Dennis did not pick up on this. After all, on sentencing the Palestinian who lost two family members in Gaza, the Judge said he took into account the emotional impact upon the protester of losing his family... “in Israel” - before sentencing him to 18 months.

“Of those charged, very few come from self-proclaimed ‘activist community’, schooled in the state's tactics. Whilst this is intended to stop Muslims from protesting at all, we hope it teaches us all another lesson. The Metropolitan Police cannot and should not be trusted. There can be no negotiation. Instead of turning to the Police for justice we should be prepared to trust in ourselves to defend ourselves. Just like Climate Camp, these protests need more legal observers with video cameras taking comprehensive notes of what takes place. Only then will we be able to prevent this happening again. Without this, the police will be able to continue to selectively edit the evidence they produce in order to remove the context: their provocation of the crowd.”

The main demonstration on 10th of January saw 100,000 people marched from Trafalgar Square towards West London on their way to the Israeli Embassy without any incidents of violence on their part. When they got near to Hyde Park, the police kettled and beat protesters under Hyde Park. The protesters were also harassed when they left the bypass. Forward Intelligence Team (FIT) and other evidence gathering teams (EGT) thrust cameras in people's faces. Police stopped and searched people without having any suspicion of them committing an offence under Section 44 of the terrorism act, which has since been ruled illegal by the European Courts (see SchNEWS 705)

In the months following the protests many were arrested in dawn raids on their houses after the police scoured hours of CCTV footage for snippets of violence. Whilst there was plenty of self-flagellation by the police follow-



BLOCK 'N' A.W.E

Protest groups from all over the UK and Europe converged on the Aldermaston nuclear bomb factory this week with around 700 individuals blockading the gates for a total of 7 hours. Organised by Trident Ploughshares with support from CND, AWP and others, the demo demanded the UK government take their supposed commitment to producing no new nuclear arms to the UN organised NPT (Non Proliferation Treaty) Review Conference in New York in May.

Each gate had its own blockade group. The protesters locked at 7am, while police watched without comment. Most staff had been told to get in early so workers were already inside the building, but protesters successfully halted any other comings and goings for most of the day, with enough numbers to combat any breaks in line the police managed.

Policing was low key, with arrests only made when some groups attempted to blockade the roads and when some entered the site at the beginning of the day. When demonstrators saw what was happening and returned to the gates, most were ‘de-arrested’ immediately. The women's gate saw the most arrests, as police attempted to clear one gate but leave the rest. A total of 26 people were cuffed and bailed on the day.

Spirits were kept up in the miserable weather by a band from the Basque country and Aberystwyth's choir Cor Gobait-hm, while Trident Ploughshares kept everybody warm and fed with tea, soup and sandwiches. The day ended with demonstrators from eight different countries voluntarily stopping the blockade, which had kept the site locked down for the whole day.

*<http://www.tridentploughshares.org>

ing their handling of the G20 protests later on in the year, no such forensic examination of the much worse policing at the Gaza protests took place. The protesters were all Muslim, and for the most part, all of working class immigrant origin. The state knows it would be easy to use the media to portray them as anti-Semitic nutters and get away with provoking them.

Further sentencing will take place on Friday 19th and Friday 26th February from 10am at Isleworth Crown Court, west London, TW7 5LP (the nearest station is Isleworth). There will be solidarity rallies outside the court.

ROSSPORT: LOBSTER PLOT

Shell to Sea campaigner and fisherman Pat O'Donnell, aka 'the chief', received a 7 month prison sentence last Thursday for breach of the peace and obstructing a Garda. Pat has consistently spoken out against the Corrib Gas Project and the collusion between Royal Dutch Shell and the Irish Government and has refused to be silenced despite violent attacks on him and his boat.

Pat, who runs a shellfish company in Erris, refused to sign up to an agreement the previous year between Shell E&P Ireland and the Erris Fishermen's Association over facilitating the laying of the offshore Corrib gas pipeline. Last June four armed and masked men sank his boat in Broadhaven Bay. Shortly after police arrested Pat and his son Jonathan - just before the arrival of Shell's pipelaying vessel, the Solitaire. They impounded both their boats but brought no charges against Pat and quickly dropped those against Jonathan. Pat said, "All I am trying to do is protect my family and the seas that are our livelihood. My family has fished these waters for five generations - I have no authority to sell the rights to these waters".

Shell to Sea spokesperson Terence Conway said, "The jailing of Pat O'Donnell shows selective prosecution on behalf of the Gardaí. Pat O'Donnell was picked out of a crowd of 60 people. The sentences are totally disproportionate to any alleged law-breaking and seem to be a punishment for opposing the Government's facilitation of Shell".

Pat will be spending the next 7 Months in Castlerea Prison. Letters of support can be sent to: Pat O'Donnell, Castlerea Prison, Haristown, Castlerea, Co Roscommon Ireland.

Alongside Pat, 20 other campaigners against the Corrib Gas Project were also up in court. Five were sentenced, receiving fines, a suspended sentence and community service.

Opposition to the exploitation of Ireland's waters, however, continues. Last weekend saw the first Rossport Solidarity UK gathering. About 40 people got together to plan and discuss the campaign to stop Shell's experimental gas pipeline in North West Ireland.

On the agenda is a bike ride to the summer Rossport gathering travelling from Merthyr Tydfil in Wales to Rossport in North West Ireland. The bike ride aims to link up communities who are resisting fossil fuel extraction in the UK and Ireland and also internationally while raising awareness of the campaigns in Myther Tydvil and Rosport. It will end in Rosport for the summer gathering. If you are interested in joining the bike ride email: climatechains@aktivix.org

There will also be a Rossport gathering on the end of May bank holiday weekend. This will be an opportunity to visit the area, find out what will be happening this year and find out how you can become part of the campaign. People are needed to come before the gathering and help set up camp. *To get involved email: rossportsolidaritycamp@gmail.com

*see www.shelltosea.com/

GET SHORTY

Calais activists briefly reopened the migrant solidarity centre following last week's violent eviction (see SchNEWS 709). The mayor of Calais ordered the eviction on the grounds that the hanger was not fit for public use, so on Wednesday morning activists opened the rented building as an exclusive private members' club.

After the centre had shut for the day, police sealed off the surrounding streets before trying to force their way into the building. They arrested the five activists that let them in to show there were no migrants inside but later released them without charge.

The area around the hangar is still sealed off and for now the centre remains closed. One activist said, "*Another violent eviction will not deter us, we will not stand by and watch human beings being treated as animals. eight years of violence and migrants are still in Calais because there is no recognition of the reasons behind migration from places such as Afghanistan, Darfur and Iran.*"

*For more information see calaismigrant-solidarity.wordpress.com

NEVER ENDING TORY

With the next election looming large, it seems the time for political parties to start cranking up their pre-election spin machines and spew out vote grabbing promises has arrived.

The Tories, ever aware of the electoral appeal of victimising minorities, are going back to basics by targeting their good ol' favourite victims, travellers and squatters.

In an attempt to win over our lovely nation, David Cameron has put forward a proposal to create a criminal offence of 'intentional trespass' to allow travellers and squatters to be evicted by the police without the usual hassle of the landowner having to apply through the civil courts for an eviction.

With immediate, fuss-free arrests on the cards, the proposals signal a sure fire end to the ability for squatters to stay one step ahead of the game.

The proposals will also curtail 'special treatment' on retrospective planning applications for traveller sites and axe Whitehall rules which call on local councils to provide sites for travellers to use.

The Tories eh? Remember them?

HECKLER PUT DOWN

Nottingham's local anti-militarists 'Shut Down H&K' did what it says on the tin today, with a rooftop occupation and lock on to the gates closing down the arms depot for the day. Banners were unfurled by the two on the roof, and the 4 people locked on stayed put until they were cut off after 6 1/2 hours. As regular SchNEWS readers will know, H&K supply high tech small arms to some of the world's most repressive regimes. H&K weapons are estimated to have caused 1.5 million deaths worldwide to date.

*see www.shutdownhk.org.uk

HOLLOWAY TO GO

The Yarl's Wood hunger strikers are now into their second week without food in their protest against the detention centre (see SchNEWS 709). On Friday, around 50 campaigners demonstrated in solidarity outside the London offices of Serco, the company that runs Yarl's Wood.

Last week Police arrested four hunger strikers who they deemed the ringleaders. The four are now being held in Holloway Prison. On Wednesday activists demonstrated outside the prison calling for the release of the four and of the other women still on hunger strike.

SDL: JOCKS-TRAP

EDL offshoot the Scottish Defence League are planning to march through Edinburgh this Saturday (20th). The Edinburgh Anti Fascist Alliance are calling for a mass, militant response to meet them. They will be assembling at 9.30am outside Princes Mall, Princes Street (near Waverley Station).

*see www.edinburghantifascist.org.uk

...and finally...

To the Viktor the spoils: Spare a thought for yer people on the mean streets of the Ukraine.

Five years ago the so-called 'Orange Revolution' saw the masses out on the streets, refusing to accept the results of a bent election, which originally declared communist party ex-con Viktor Yanukovich as the winner. They inspirationally rose up as one and as a reward got a taste of liberal cosying up to America style democracy.

Unfortunately this was the usual recipe of massive 'cheap' debt, opening up to privatisation - and like Iceland, Greece and Ireland, the credit meltdown has hit them harder than most. Their economy shrank 15% last year. Naturally this hasn't proved too popular and left voters choosing between the devil and the deep blue sea in the current presidential elections.

The first round eliminated 'hero of the revolution' Viktor Yushchenko leaving the aforementioned brute Yanukovich, squaring up to Yulia Tymoshenko - the lady (former economist and gas-fortune oligarch) made Prime Minister after the 'revolution' who has presided over the subsequent economic descent.

In January Victor was announced the victor, but the result was suspended this week after Yulia had challenged it in court producing 16 crates of evidence of election fraud.

Anecdotal evidence has emerged alleging everything from women braving the winter wind in topless protests, disappearing ink pens being discovered at a number of polling stations (clever!) and people taking a pile of ballot papers and chucking 'em away.

Which ever way this hobson's choice eventually plays out, independent election monitors have declared it a roaring success and an "impressive display" of democracy comparable to those in exemplary Western countries.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, don't show yer face at a riot (mask up). Honest.

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