

FLIGHT BRIGADE

EUROPEAN WEEK OF ACTION AGAINST THE DEPORTATION MACHINE

"We now remove an immigration offender every eight minutes - but my target is to remove more, and remove them faster." - Liam Byrne, Immigration Minister, 19th May 2008

Migrant rights activists across the UK are readying themselves for next week's European Week of Action Against the Deportation Machine. Campaigners are calling out for a week of protest and direct action targeting the government agencies and private companies responsible for shipping migrants out of Blighty and back to the desperate situations they risked their lives to flee, often subjecting them to violent abuse on their way (see SchNEWS 669).

With parties across the political spectrum baying for the removal of migrants - easy scapegoats for any number of society's ills - the last government made the deportation of 'failed asylum seekers' and 'immigration offenders' (undocumented migrants who decided not to go through the torturous and twisted immigration process) a priority. The UK Border Agency (UKBA) shows scant regard for why these people may have risked their lives to come to Britain and unblinkingly deports them back to warzones, including Iraq and Afghanistan, or into the hands of the rapists and abusers they've escaped.

The deportation process is often brutal and both mentally and physically abusive. A 2008 report by Medical Justice Network and the National Coalition of Anti-deportation Campaigns (NCADC), 'Outsourcing Abuse', recorded incidents of beatings, people who were punched, kicked, choked or gagged, 'overzealously' restrained, racially abused, dragged about by handcuffs or hair, sat on and even sexually abused.

While many migrants are deported on standard flights, the increasing success of deportees in preventing flights by appealing to their fellow passengers or making a scene has led to the increasing use of specially chartered flights, which deport up to 80 people at a time. In 2009 there were 64 charter flights, deporting a total 973 people. The majority of them are deported to countries ripped apart by war and armed conflict such as Iraq, Afghanistan, DR Congo, Nigeria, Jamaica, Sri Lanka and Cameroon. Many have been kidnapped, imprisoned, tortured and killed on their return.

With no ordinary passengers to keep the immigration authorities even vaguely civil, there is mounting evidence that the people on these flights are frequently subjected to horrendous

abuse. Deportees are habitually handcuffed and forced onto the plane with threats of violence. Any attempts to resist are met with violent 'restraining techniques'. On numerous occasions these have degenerated into outright thuggery with contracted 'escorts' savagely beating whole planeloads of resisting deportees.

The removal of people on charter flights is also used to deny migrants even the basic legal rights permitted to them by a legal system hell bent on their removal. The UKBA-stards state: "charter flights may be subject to 'different arrangements' where it is considered appropriate because of the complexities, practicalities and costs of arranging an operation." These 'different arrangements' include the stipulation that removals do not have to be stopped in the event of judicial reviews - removing the possibility of last-minute appeals - and that in many cases migrants do not have to be told the time, date or departure airport of the flights. Instead migrants are often woken up at the crack of dawn and told to switch off their phones so they can't alert family, friends or lawyers before being escorted to the airport (see SchNEWS 720)

FLYING PICKETS

Of course the UKBA is still some way from having its own cell-to-hell transport system, so relies on private companies who, of course, make a tidy profit from the inhumane opportunity. In 2008-09, the UKBA splashed out £8.2 million on charter flights. Airlines that are known to have been used include Hamburg International, Czech Airlines, Titan Airways, BMI and others. Bus companies who drive deportees from detention centres to airports have included WH Tours and Woodcock Coaches. Security companies used to 'escort' the deportees include Group 4 Securicor (G4S) and Serco.

The action will kick off on Saturday (29th) with a picnic against deportations in Finsbury Park, where activists will gather to discuss and co-ordinate actions for the week ahead with, of course, some delicious scran and maybe a spot of frisbee. The week will climax with a mass demo against deportation the following Saturday (5th June). While a number of actions and campaigns are planned in-between, organisers are calling for activists to stand up and be counted and plan their own autonomous actions and protests throughout the week.



The Plan:

Tuesday, 1st June - Pickets at immigration reporting centres. **1-2pm** - Picket at Communications House (Old Street, London), organised by Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!. **3-5pm** - Picket at Becketts House (London Bridge, London), organised by No Borders London. For more details, see here.

Wednesday, 2nd June - An open discussion: 'Challenging deportations: Past, Present and Future', organised by No Borders London. 7pm @ LARC. For more details, see here.

Thursday, 3rd June - Actions against private contractors. Watch out for details. Get in touch with Stop Deportation Network (see below) if you're interested.

Thursday, 3rd June/Friday, 4th June - Online campaign targeting booking agents and a major British airline involved in deportation flights, organised by the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC). More details soon.

Saturday, 5th June - Mass demo against deportations in Parliament Square, London, called by Stop Deportation. 2-4pm.

* See stopdeportation@riseup.net or www.stopdeportation.net or www.ncadc.org.uk for details, or contact 07847 923251

** For an account of the abuse suffered by deportees see www.medicaljustice.org.uk/images/stories/reports/outourcing%20abuse.pdf

SchMOVIES In Brief...

JUN 1st - It's the 'silver jubilee' of the **Battle of Beanfield** - 25 years to the day since cops dealt travellers one of the most vicious beatings in living memory. Yes, we perversely decided to make a big retrospective deal of it on the landmark 24th anniversary (see SchNEWS 678) so instead SchMOVIES will be showing the Beanfield documentary 'Operation Solstice' at the Cowley Club, 12 London Rd Brighton from 8pm. Free / donations. **

2nd - Brighton Campaigns Network: SchMOVIES & dirt digging Brighton newsletter, Rough Music offer up a night of networking, movies, stalls and a DJ all packed into the Cowley Club. Films of local actions include Smash EDO, Lewes Rd Community Garden, Titnore Woods and Calais Migrant Solidarity. To watch campaign films online see www.schnews.org.uk/schmovies **For events listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap**

COPS CIRCLE THE SQUARE

Nick 'Extra' Clegg made much of civil liberties during his 'big bang' damp squib policy launch last week.

However, it was an altogether more traditional Tory approach actually on the streets this week (25th) as cops evicted the Democracy Village protest camp at Parliament Square (see SchNEWS 722). Well you can't have the hoy polloi mooching around looking untidy when the Queen's coming for the State opening of Parliament. Not even when her speech itself promised the "return of the right to peaceful protest."

It seems cops sprung into action at the behest of London Mayor Boris Johnson, who'd clearly been rifling through Red Ken's dusty old filing cabinets before finding some old GLA bye-laws to use to say bye bye to the camp which had successfully made the square home since May 1st.

But clearing away the anti-Afghan war protesters wasn't enough - police also arrested and detained more permanent parliament resident Brian Haw, and his right hand fellow anti-Iraq war protester, Barbara Tucker.

Despite Brian having previously been arrested numerous times for no good reason - as well as having his possessions illegally seized and trashed - before later being repeatedly vindicated in court (see SchNEWS 609, 607), cops were not at all hesitant when Brian asked to see a warrant and tried to film them after they turned up first thing in the morning demanding to search his tent.

Despite Brian currently being on crutches, cops weren't slow to roughly seize him for not getting out of the way quick enough - thus 'obstructing police' and they carted him and Barbara off for a pointless day of discomfort in the cells. Both were held for just over 24 hours before being unconditionally bailed til July. They are now safely back in the Square - but at least her maj' didn't haven't to glimpse him from her car window as she went by...

Video of Brian's arrest: www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXjL5bNkV1I

WAR-SORE

Rioting broke out on the streets of Warsaw last Sunday (23rd) after police gunned down a Nigerian immigrant.

Police swept down on Nigerian traders in the Praga district of Warsaw. As one man was handcuffed and shoved to the ground by cops, a friend tried to help him and got shot in the process. The man shot was a 36-year-old merchant from Nigeria, and the gun shot proved fatal. This immediately led to clashes with the police who fell on the panicked traders and started rounding them up.

As more police arrived, riots broke out. People hurled bricks and stones at the cops and four police vans were destroyed. A total of 32 people were arrested before cops managed to clamp their order on the situation. 25 of them are now facing up to 10 years in prison for assaulting a police officer.

Later on that day people assembled at the site of the shooting. After some speeches were made the crowd held an impromptu demonstration and headed to the police station where the detainees are being held. They demanded the immediate release of the people imprisoned and an end to the continued harassment of immigrants. Those detained were released on bail the following morning but still face charges.

This Saturday, a solidarity event is planned for Warsaw residents to gather and rename the plaza next to where the incident took place, in honor of Maxwell Iyatoya, the man killed.

* See www.cia.bzzz.net/wideo_smierci_na_stadione_video_of_death_at_the_stadium and use your search engine to translate www.solidarnizmaksem.bzzz.net

PAN HANDLED

We only recently became aware of the following, but because we believe that flagging up stories of police racism - swiftly followed by police brutality - should never go unpublished, we decided to run with it anyway.

Samuel, a steel pan musician, having busked in London for ten years, was having a regular busk at the South Kensington tube station on September 29th last year when two police came up and told him to move on. Being savvy of the busking laws, he asked if there had been a complaint, which cops said there had, so he agreed to leave and began packing up. When one policeman asked him if he had a permit, and Samuel replied (correctly) that the local council for that area didn't issue permits, things spiralled downwards...

The policeman got arsey because Samuel, now engaged in packing up his instruments, appeared to be ignoring the snide remarks coming from the copper, who told him "Stop, I'm speaking to you". To which he replied "what's wrong, little man?" (apparently the copper was short). The PC said "if you say 'little man' one more time, you're nicked". He did. He was then forcibly handcuffed, his steel drums getting trashed in the process, and CS was sprayed into his face. He was pushed face-down onto the pavement and assaulted as he vomited from ingesting the spray. More police arrived on the scene.

While on the ground, one copper put his knee into Samuel's back and whispered, "You fucking black c**t, you black c**t", and other police joined in the racial abuse as they stuck him in a van. Once at the station, Samuel asked which one had uttered these words to him, and all the officers looked at one another saying 'not me'. Police claim there is no CCTV footage of the incident - yeah right, this is a central London tube station. He spent a whole night in a Notting Hill police station cell. He has facial scarring from the violent arrest.

Samuel was found guilty at West London Court on two counts of assaulting an officer, one count of resisting arrest, and on April 1st was sentenced to 70 hours of community service. An appeal will only now be allowed if witnesses come forward or CCTV footage is found - if you happened to see this vile racist attack happen, contact us and we will pass the info on.

* See www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=177276456245&ref=ts

H&K: A KIRK IN THE TEETH

Nottingham anti-militarist activist Kirk Jackson was found guilty of aggravated trespass at Nottingham Magistrates Court last Thursday for his role in a February action that shut the arms manufacturer down for the day (see SchNEWS 710). He was handed a 12 month conditional discharge and ordered to pay £350 costs.

Five other Shut H&K activists arrested at the protest pleaded guilty and were sentenced in March (see SchNEWS 715)

*See www.shutdownnhk.org.uk

HOMES ALONE

The ever helpful Daily Telegraph is providing an invaluable service for squatters with a taste for the high life with their new feature "Selling Up". The guide helpfully lists properties whose owners have jumped ship and "voted with their feet" since the election. Currently lying invitingly vacant are a range of charming country cottages and stunning town houses worth up to £1.4 million. Check out the pics on the website (www.telegraph.co.uk/property/propertypicturegalleries/7750520/Selling-up-on-the-market-since-the-election.html) to find yer nearest swanky vacant just begging to be cracked.

BP: BLOCK IN THE PIPELINE

Colombian oil workers have occupied a processing facility following the breakdown of negotiations with human-rights thrashing machine BP.

Last Friday (21st) workers moved on the site in Casanare, blocking all building works carried out in the complex. Although the workers have allowed production work to continue unhindered, BP responded with a propaganda barrage claiming they have sabotaged negotiations by intimidating production workers and blocking food and water deliveries for those inside.

The conflict between the oil workers and BP has continued since the start of the year when workers began a campaign for better pay and conditions. In February a workers strike was brutally broken up by riot police (see SchNEWS 711).

The latest round of talks between the workers and BP collapsed at the start of the month when BP attempted to stall talks until late June.

Colombia solidarity activists are planning a picket outside BP HQ in St James Square in London on Wednesday 2nd of June. They are also urging activists to take autonomous action against BP wherever it is to be found.

* See www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk/
Send messages of solidarity to the workers and community via email: movimientoporcasanare@yahoo.es

In the Gulf of Mexico, meanwhile, a fully occupied BP would love an oil stoppage as they go for 'Top Kill'...



...and finally...

In a dizzying marriage of high-speed car culture and ancient nature worship, motorway bosses in Austria have secretly hired a full-time team of druids to improve road safety at accident blackspots.

Keen to Getafix for their safety issues, Austria's motorway authority hired the druids to drain the area's 'negative energy' and restore the spiritual peace of the pristine tarmac slicing its way through the countryside.

And what's more all the paganeering seemed to deliver high performance: in one spot the fatal accident rate fell from an average of six a year to zero. The trials were so impressive officials have announced plans to roll the scheme out nationwide.

The team of green cross mystics apparently search out negative radiation with dowsing rods and restore the area's "terrestrial radiation". Reports of ritualistic sacrifices of Ford Mondeos on the hard shoulder are unconfirmed. For their part the Druids are now calling for fellow pagans to "clunk click" on every magic-potion fuelled trip.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, a one way ticket out of Britain isn't always as good as it sounds. Honest.

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