

LET THEM EAT LEAD

AS FAMINE STRIKES SOMALIA, THE US JUST SERVES UP MORE BOMBS

Somalia has officially been designated 'world's worst country to be in' by the UN, who declared the Horn of Africa region (Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti) a famine zone. The UK's own Disasters Emergency Commission has already started a fund-raising campaign for famine relief. Famine is hardly new to the parched area, which has already been teetering on the brink of mass starvation for years.

The USA has also stepped up its efforts in Somalia. However, their particular brand of intervention has not been exactly what Somalis have asked for. The US State Department announced in the beginning of July that they had begun employing UAV drones to bomb the country. The USA is now simultaneously providing food aid and missile strikes to the same country.

It's no surprise (although it's barely been reported in the western press) that the famine is much more political in nature than it is environmental. Climate change has pushed a harsh climate closer to the edge, but it is the bloody civil war and total breakdown of civilian state institutions that has left Somalia unable to plan for droughts and failed harvests. Somalia nearly had something that looked like a semi-workable government briefly in 2006 (see SchNEWS 567) but that was destroyed by a joint US/

Ethiopian invasion that laid the groundwork for a bloody insurgency and brutal intra-Islamist civil war that continues to this day.

Somalia thus joins Yemen, Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine and Iraq as the battlefield of the USA-led robot war on the world's poor.

To date the US has only publicly confirmed one drone strike in Somali territory, targeting soldiers fighting for the Al-Shabab Islamist movement on the 23rd June. Effectively, team Obama has restarted the Bush-era policy of strategic strikes on Somali targets ('targets' which may be either Al Qaeda militants or goat herders), only with drones in place of attack helicopters and A10 gunships. It is believed that the drones were launched from Manda Bay, a US airbase in Kenya.

Meanwhile, the international response to the famine has been deemed too little and too slow. The world's largest complex of refugee camps, Daadab, has become overfilled with people escaping both war and famine, to the point where it is no longer able to receive more refugees. Its population is now a staggering 380,000, and refugees are now forced to make their own shelters on its outskirts.

* See www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news/voices/ for news from the frontline of famine relief in Somalia.

FLOAT SOME AND JET SOME

AS ISRAEL BLOCKS ALL ATTEMPTS BY ACTIVISTS TO REACH GAZA

The Israeli navy on Tuesday (19th) prevented the last remaining participant of an international flotilla of ships headed for Gaza. The French yacht, Dignité, had left the Greek island of Kastelorizo last Saturday pretending it was headed for Egypt. The Greek government had stopped the rest of the flotilla leaving port earlier that week (see SchNEWS 779). Four Israeli naval boats enclosed Dignité as it approached, commanding that they quit their efforts to break the sea blockade and threatening to seize control of the boat if they did not obey. There were 16 passengers on board hailing from France, Canada, Greece, Sweden and Tunisia. This time the boat wasn't carrying aid but was sailing purely to highlight the blockade surrounding Gaza, wishing to breach it as an act of defiance.

This wave of the Freedom flotilla may be the last to try to sail to Gaza. Although over years the flotillas have scored major successes, the human cost to the participants has been immense, culminating in the massacre of 9 Turkish peace activists in June 2010 (See SchNEWS 725).

The worldwide revulsion to this criminal act of brutality brought a partial lifting of the siege, and this has been followed by a free passage agreement with the post-revolutionary government. But since then, European countries have directly allied and coordinated with the Israeli military, and all

but the Dignité were left dead in the water, stopped even from leaving port with their legal cargoes of humanitarian aid. With the possible end of the flotillas, the question left is how international activists can continue to creatively defy Israel's siege of Gaza and the occupation of Palestine.

It certainly won't be by air. Israel's detention of international activists attempting to visit the West Bank by plane two weeks ago shows their blockading doesn't always happen at checkpoints or at sea. Plans of the Welcome to Palestine campaign, who were expecting hundreds of solidarity activists to join them for a week of peaceful education and resistance in the territories, were halted as Israel convinced European airports to bar 200 'blacklisted' travellers from boarding planes to Tel Aviv on Friday 8th.

The activists, many of whom were known to Israeli authorities from previous Palestinian excursions, made no secret of their intentions to visit the West Bank as part of the fly-in. For those who made it to Ben Gurion International, 69 were arrested and detained after questioning, along with six Israelis who had arrived to welcome the so-called 'flytilla'. The first 36 detainees were deported two days after arrival on Sunday 10th with waves of deportations back to Europe in the following days.

AS ONE HAPPY CUSTOMER RUPERT, 60, REPORTS:

I HAD A PRETTY CLOSE SHAVE AT THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE BUT I RECKON I GOT AWAY WITH IT...



CALAIS CATERING CALL OUT

Calais NO Borders activists are now having to shoulder the burden of food distribution in addition to their usual tasks of monitoring the police and helping migrants. Normally, two Calais based charities Belle Etoile and SALAM provide daily food distro to refugees. However, both groups are taking a break over July and August meaning the task has fallen to No Borders. They have coordinated a grass-roots activist catering collective operation, visiting Calais on a rota to provide material support to the 'sans-papiers' community.

The situation for migrants in Calais grows ever harder as the screws are tightened - SchNEWS spoke to one No Borders activist: "After the eviction of Africa House (see SchNEWS 778), migrants started trying to sleep inside the food compound area - this was viciously evicted so some ended up in a makeshift camp on the railway sidings near the river." This was where No Borders started the food distro, but the 'River Camp' was evicted a few days later, with the now familiar methods of tear gas and seizure of migrants' property. There is a co-ordinated policy of psychological warfare against migrants in the Calais area, with arrests, harassment and seizure of shelters all leading to continual sleep deprivation for the sans-papiers groups.

Police have also tried to drive a wedge between No Borders activists and migrants, threatening migrants with more raids if they believe that activists are present. The cops have also been using whistles (No Borders preferred way of letting migrants know about police presence) and conducting raids specifically to look for activists.

Currently No Borders are running a food distro in the evenings on a pedestrianised railway bridge - 'The police watch us, but this is a very high visibility area so they seem reluctant to intervene. We have a lot of migrants who can come and cook with us now - so it seems like less of a hand-out'.

Calais Migrant Solidarity have issued a call out for food, tents and tarpaulins. If you can make it to Calais or just want to help, call 0033 631 869 878.

SchNEWS in Brief

JULY: (23) Brighton Benefits Campaign have called for a Protest Against Welfare Cuts & Privatisation - Sat 23 July, The Level Brighton 12 noon ***"The Spuds don't work" protest against GM crop trials in Norwich - starts 12 noon at The Forum, Millennium Plain, Norwich, NR2 1BH, going to the John Innes Research Centre. Email: info@stopgm.org.uk - www.stopgm.org.uk ** Protest against nuclear waste trains travelling through the Olympic Site. Rally and die-in outside Stratford station 1.30-3pm. Email: david.lrcnd@cnduk.org - www.nonucleartrains.org.uk ** A prisoner support campaign has been set up for imprisoned anti-fascists: <http://antifascistprisonersupportuk.wordpress.com>

** See WWW.SCHNEWS for bonus stories:

TAKEN FOR RIDE: AS GREEK TAXI STRIKE BLOCKADES ATHENS...

RIP LUCERO AGUILAR: LIFE AND DEATH FOR THOSE CAUGHT IN MEXICO'S DRUG WAR

BRAZIL NUTS

Let's see some major greenwash in action. In 2007 and 2008 the Brazilian government gave the go-ahead to the despoiling of large swathes of pristine Amazon ecosystem with a plan to build up to ten hydroelectric dams. This will then pave the way for hundreds of billion's worth of roads, gas pipelines and infrastructure in order to open up the area for colonisation, logging and exploitation of all the region's other raw materials (all as we foretold in www.schnews.org.uk/sotw/plan-coca-cola.htm).

As well as vast eco-destruction, the first £15bn phase of the plan - building two dams on the Madeira River, a major Amazon river tributary, at Santo Antonio and Jirau - will displace vast numbers of indigenous peoples including tribes of uncontacted Indians, erasing their homelands and leaving them in poverty - and indeed at threat of extermination from diseases they have not previously been exposed to. Cue a low rising tide of global protests over the following couple of years, bolstered when some of the indigenous leaders travelled to Europe to raise awareness of their plight.

Europe's largest bank, Santander, was one of the banks targeted for arranging finance for the project. Eager to dam the wave of negative publicity and tap into that all important irate liberal consciousness dollar, the bank apparently finally caved in and stated that it was turning off the cash tap. In May 2011 they claimed it had suspended funding for the Santo Antonio dam (work began last year), citing environmental and social concerns. It was widely reported by a range of news media as being a major blow for the project, and activists - like those good folk at www.survivalinternational.org - duly reported a minor victory. Perhaps a few naïve sorts' hopes rose that Western corporate interests could be shamed out of participation of such eco-crimes.

But no such luck. Here we are less than three months later - and Santander has quietly admitted that actually, er, it never actually suspending the funding at all. Despite have been caught out flagrantly telling bare-faced lies, this revelation has made much less of a splash in the media and not even a ripple amongst shareholders and the financial markets.

Meanwhile, the work goes on, although not necessarily all that smoothly. Work on both Santo Antonio and Jirau, has been hit and even halted by workers' strikes which saw riots, and installations torched by slave-like workers rallying for fairer pay and conditions. The violence was only quashed when the government sent the military in. At present the work is continuing - more or less at gunpoint.

Why not tell yer local Santander branch all about it?

GOOD WILL HUNTINGTON

Activists at Huntington Lane protest site are manning the barricades, occupying the treehouses and descending into tunnels after UK Coal won a possession order last Friday (15th). The Shropshire camp was established 18 months ago to prevent an environmentally devastating new coal mine from being built on 230 acres of ancient woodland (see SchNEWS 714, 744). Cops and bailiffs are expected to trot up en masse at any point, so the campers are issuing an urgent call-out for bodies to defend the site. See www.defendhuntingtonlane.wordpress.com

UNHAMPERED

Last Monday (18th), 109 of the UKUncut protesters charged with aggravated trespass in Forum & Mason on 26th March (see SchNEWS 765) had their cases dropped as the Crown Prosecution Service felt it was not in the public interest. However, the CPS are still keen to prosecute those they view as organisers - the 30 still facing trial include those found with leaflets and flags.

WAYWARDS HEATH

Newly formed Croydon No Borders have called for a demonstration in Haywards Heath on Saturday 30th July. They are protesting against Mid Sussex Council's decision to grant planning permission for a new detention centre (see SchNEWS 760) which is due to open in September in nearby Pease Pottage.

The centre will be run by the 'global security services' company G4S. G4S are also bidding to provide accommodation and services for asylum seekers as well as already running four immigration detention centres and having the contract to transport asylum seekers between detention centres.

As the Tory government continues the process of privatising the state, companies such as G4S are set to make ever increasing profits out of detention and deportation. G4S have a particularly nasty history having dealt out abuse, violence and occasionally death to those unlucky enough to be on the receiving end of their 'services'.

Croydon No Borders are asking people to bring banners, placards and instrument and help call for an end to detention and deportation. Meet at Muster Green, Haywards Heath at 1pm.

*see <http://london.noborders.org.uk/>

ENDURE A CELL

Greek's premier anarchist bombers, 'The Conspiracy of Cells of Fire' have been on trial. A court in Athens on Tuesday (19th) found six out of the nine defendants guilty of criminal offences, one guilty of minor charges and the final two were acquitted. Oddly, it seems one of the only things they were not accused of is conspiracy!

Out of those charged, Haris Hatzimichelakis and Panagiotis Argirou were found guilty of setting up a terrorist organisation, possession and making of explosives, and 'moral instigation' of three bomb explosions - and 25 years in prison. The three explosions correlate to the attack on former deputy interior minister's home on July 2009, the blast at the ministry of Macedonia and Thrace that same year and the blow out at a PASOK official's home a few weeks later (see SchNEWS 755).

The other four who were charged were bludgeoned similarly, getting between 11 and 20 years each for 'membership of a terrorist group'.

Whilst the rebels are laid to rest, the people responsible for the crisis were meeting yesterday (21st) in Brussels to thrash out ways of lending even more unrepayable cash in the desperate hope of avoiding the inevitable Greek default and ensuing eurozone financial fallout.

RATCLIFF HANGER

"The appellants were convicted following a trial in which elementary principles which underpin the fairness of our trial procedures were ignored" - The words of the appropriately named Lord Judge as 20 climate protesters had their convictions quashed this week by the appeal court. Originally 114 people were arrested in a pre-emptive raid on a squatted school on 14th April 2009 - for allegedly planning to shut down Ratcliffe powerstation. 26 were charged with conspiracy to commit aggravated trespass, 20 used the defence of lawful excuse, but were ultimately convicted (SchNEWS 752). Their convictions were overturned as, by the time the other six came to trial, Mark Kennedy (née Stone) had been outed as an undercover cop and the cases were dropped amid rumours he was planning to testify for the defence.

PARTY & PROTEST

For events listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

POMPEY & CIRCUMSTANCE

Despite claims of an army of 1500 mobilising, in the end the Portsmouth EDL turn-out on July 16th was around 250. Their original plan was to lay a wreath at the war memorial in Guildhall Square, but the War Graves Commission was having none of it and in the event, it was the UAF who were able to have their rally there. Instead the hapless knuckle-draggers trudged round a small industrial estate in the rain chanting racist nonsense.

Around 200 counter-protesters, consisting of UAF and anti-fascists, assembled in Guildhall square at 11am and occupied it until the protest came to an end at around 3pm. Police had apparently planned for around 600 EDL and so were well in control all day. A few members of the EDL youth wing approached the square, managed to look like idiots and soon got arrested. There were small confrontations with anti-fascists later in the day as the respective demos broke up. A small anti-fascist contingency remained to patrol the streets, concentrating in the area around the local mosque, but despite threatening night-time racist wrath, the EDL were a no show.

PIE IN THE SKY

Rupert Murdoch received what might be the closest he gets to justice this Tuesday when he got pined by an activist who'd been waiting for his chance armed with a paper plate and shaving foam.

Comedian and sometime UK Uncut activist "Jonnie Marbles" was promptly arrested and carted away (to write an article for the Grauniad from his holding cell), leaving Murdoch to (nearly) face the music in front of a toothless parliamentary committee. Murdoch might have been glad of the distraction, as his empire has been held up to the light for pretty much the first time ever, and clan Murdoch has revealed itself as being vulnerable to mortal weapons (see SchNEWS 778).

Meanwhile, the backlash from News International hacks' electronic gravedigging has claimed the careers of more of Britain's elite, with two of the country's most senior coppers the latest to be given the boot. Who would have thought that police, political and media figures would be conspiring and scheming together? There is a whole generation of politicians and journos out there hoping this slow churn of revelations and resultant scrutiny stops before it spreads from only News International and engulfs them all...

...and finally...

Feel-good story of the week is surely the heart-warming tale (tail?) of a stray dog called Loukanikos (which translated is 'Sausage' apparently, although we prefer 'Likes Anarchists'). He has been involved in the Greek protest scene for years and is regularly caught on riot footage, often brazenly running the gauntlet in no-man's land between protesters and police, barking and taunting the police line. Despite the carnage and constant tear-gas assaults he doggedly keeps coming back for more, setting an inspiring example for his human co-demonstrators. His exploits have not gone unnoticed, and Sausage is one hot dog in medialand. In true 21st c style, Louk has become a You Tube star. Videos showcasing the canine crusader abound (Scroogle: 'Greek riot dog') and he is also the subject of a David Rovic song, no less (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=bR_97V59LbE&playnext=1&list=PL3B59809368E91411) A hero for our times has been unleashed...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, don't ever get caught drone alone. 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, c/o Community Base, 113 Queens Rd, Brighton, BN1 3XG. Tel +44 (0)1273 685913 Email mail@schnews.org.uk Web www.schnews.org.uk