

Immigration detainees fight back

April 2008

The immigration prisons at both Harmondsworth and Yarl's Wood have seen detainees fight back against their imprisonment, appalling conditions and their unjust removals.

On April 1st a hunger strike began in Harmondsworth. It involved most of the detainees there – between 200 and 300 people.

“We are human beings, we want to be treated with dignity we shall stay in the courtyard until our demands are heard.”

The detainees were complaining that they are being deported without having their cases properly heard, all the while being detained without having committed any crime. The so-called 'fast-track' system means that asylum seekers are not getting enough time to prepare their cases and legal representation is often of very poor quality. They further say that they are being abused by detention staff.

Later, they also occupied the courtyard and around 120 of them remained there all night. A petition, with 116 signatures, has been sent to the European Court of Human Rights.

Most detainees went off their hunger strike as it was hoped that the Home Office would listen to their demands. After the 'negotiations' failed to produce any results, the food refusal resumed on Friday, April 4th.

On Saturday, 5th April, between 5 and 6am, around 50 police in riot gear stormed the prison, near Heathrow, to break the detainees hunger strike. They took 30 detainees away and most of them were put in solitary confinement or taken

into normal prisons to prevent them from communicating with each other and the outside world. One detainee, who managed to contact supporters, said he was bruised all over his body, had injuries from handcuffs and a damaged ankle. He also reported that he saw another detainee being violently manhandled by police.

In November 2006, Harmondsworth had to close down for the second time after being damaged during another uprising, following the publication of a report by prison inspector Anne Owers, in which the centre was strongly criticised. The four men who were arbitrarily accused of "conspiring to commit violent disorder" have recently been acquitted after standing trial.



Yarl's Wood - “We don't even think that it is normal to put kids in prison.”

Seven mothers in the family unit in Yarl's Wood immigration prison have been on hunger strike Thursday, April 10th. They include two breast-feeding mothers. The protest involves up to 15 families and began when a mother with her baby, who were to be taken to the airport and deported to Burundi, took refuge in a church and refused to leave.

The woman, whose baby is unwell, has been kicked in the ribs by immigration offices and is also suffering from back pain.

The women's statement says “This is cruel and insult to these poor children, these poor children they have got their own rights in this country but you have taken their rights. The bad thing is that most of the families have been in detention more than a month now, flights have been cancelled judicial Reviews have been lodged but the Home Office are keeping us and they know that Yarl's Wood is one of the worst detention centres in England according to how they treat the people.”

“We are not even allowed to take anything from the dining room, not even a cup of water. The hygiene at Yarl's Wood is terrible; no nursing places they are asking parents to wash baby bottles in the toilet sink.”

Spotlight on Sodexo

Sodexo was the family business of JP Bellon of Marseille, who is still its main shareholder. The company, once mainly involved in catering, has expanded to supply armed forces, oil rigs, run privatised prisons and security services and is involved with supplying the US forces in Iraq and with Guantanamo Bay.

After Belon's financial support of Sarkozy's election campaign, Sarkozy made Bellon president of the French commission on selective immigration policies (managed migration). The most remarkable suggestion Bellon has so far made is that the average duration of immigration detention in Europe should be expanded to 18 months. Who profits?

Notts Zimbabwe demo

29 March 2008

At 2pm on Saturday 29th March, on the day of the Zimbabwean elections, folks gathered to highlight the dangers that people who have fled Zimbabwe will face, if they are forcibly returned there.

No Borders Nottingham had called for the demonstration at our shiny new [temporary] Speakers Corner, on the edge of the Market Square, Nottingham. Some who had gathered there were asylum seekers who have come here for help, and their supporters demonstrating their wish that these people should not be turned away.

More Cardiff BIA pickets

16 April 2008

Around 12 No Borders South Wales activists held a picket outside the Border and Immigration Agency in Cardiff.

This is the agency responsible for removing Ama Sumani from her hospital bed in Cardiff and forcing her to return to a country where she couldn't afford treatment and died.

This is the agency that sends out snatch squads to perform dawn raids on unsuspecting families, who launch attacks on innocent people to maintain Britain's unjust border controls.

Hundreds of leaflets were handed out to passing members of the public and to asylum seekers who are forced to sign at this building.

No Borders South Wales are committed to organising against migration controls. We will continue to bring attention to the immoral activities of the Border and Immigration Agency.



Manchester No Borders demo for 'free spaces'

12 April 2008

Up to 200 No Borders supporters followed a call for an unauthorised demonstration in Manchester's city centre. They were accompanied by a samba band (Rhythms of Resistance) and two sound systems mounted on bike trailers. With the cops not bothering to show up, they marched undisturbed from Victoria Station into the Northern Quarter, along Market Street and Kings Street, through Spinningfields into Castlefields.

The demonstration was called for the freedom of movement for all and in defence of autonomous spaces. Manchester No Borders argued that when people migrate across borders and occupy spaces to live in, they equally take control of their own lives. A spokesper-

son for the group said: "Squats and autonomous spaces face a hard time from the authorities. Yet, for many people, especially some migrant communities, they are the only alternative to homelessness."

The demonstration thus highlighted the ridiculousness of hundreds of houses standing empty, while many of us face extortionate rents, mortgage repayments or eviction threats. A participant said: "It was about time that someone protested about the invisible borders that divide the city into rich and poor".

The demo in itself was a great success! Three large banners were displayed, reading 'Freedom of Movement for all – defend autonomous

spaces', 'No Borders, No Nations – against migration management', and 'Occupy – Resist'. There was a banner drop along the route, and hundreds of spoof 'Mesho' newspapers were given out.

At the end of the route, the protesters succeeded in collectively occupying Jackson's Wharf, an old pub that was the focus of a successful local campaign against redevelopment. Up to a hundred squatters entered the abandoned building, hanging banners from its balcony and opening bottles of cava that No Borders had provided!

Angel Group targeted in Leeds

11 April 2008

As part of the days of action in support of squats and autonomous spaces, an Angel Group building was graffitied, locks glued, and 12 company vehicles damaged

Angel Group make their money by providing poor quality housing for asylum seekers, profiting from vulnerable people and racist asylum laws.

This company were targeted as part of the days of action

in support of squats and autonomous spaces because housing is a right, not a means to make profit. This company are known to exploit their position of providing housing to vulnerable people who are not in a position to complain, getting away with providing substandard accomodation.

The front of the Angel Group offices were redecorated,

slogans painted, and locks glued. 12 company vehicles were attacked with paint stripper, spray paint, and had their tyres slashed.

This should send a message to Angel that their racist business will not be tolerated. .

Newcastle dawn raid protesters on trial

27 March 2008

Three protesters against immigration controls attended Market Street Magistrates Court, Newcastle after they showed their solidarity to a refugee family on October 10th last year.

Immigration Service officers and police raided two asylum seekers' family houses in Brighton Grove, Newcastle at 6:30 am. Within minutes of their arrival a group of 20 local people gathered outside the houses in a noisy but peaceful demonstration in solidarity with the threatened families. Soon after, the snatch squad withdrew with four arrested protesters in the back of their van but without any families being taken.

One protester, who attempted to immobilize the Immigration Service vehicle, pleaded guilty to obstruction and a section 5 public order offense.

He was fined a total of £277 including "victim surcharge" and a contribution to state legal expenses. The magistrate said "We understand that you feel strongly about this issue but we think that this time you went to far".

One protester was released without charge and two protesters pleaded not guilty to obstruction of the police. Their case is still in progress. While in custody one of them was refused a translator and the other was strip searched.

Leeds demo outside Home Office

27 March 2008

A demonstration calling for an end to detention and deportations was held outside the Home Office immigration reporting centre at Waterside Court in Leeds.

The protest coincided with the publication of the Independent Asylum Commission's report which states that the treatment of asylum seekers is "seriously below the standards to be expected of a humane and civilised society".

Waterside Court in Kirkstall is the home of the regional office of the National Asylum Support Service and the Immigration Nationality Directorate. Asylum seekers must report here with their identity card and papers every month, fortnight, week and even every day, or risk imprisonment and deportation.