

GOING TO HELL-AS

MIGRANTS IN GREECE CAUGHT BETWEEN REPRESSIVE STATE AND RACISM

Over a thousand migrants have been arrested and made homeless over the last two months after the Greek government launched a sweeping crack-down in the port city of Igoumenitsa.

Last month the Greek government announced the scorched earth policy at Igoumenitsa alongside plans to begin the construction of 14 new detention and deportation centres. Since then police have evicted squats and razed camps in an increasingly violent campaign that has left many migrants badly beaten.

Igoumenitsa is the second largest departure point for migrants escaping from Greece for Italy and up to 1000 migrants live there at any time, including refugees from many of the world's war-zones. The migrants live in squalid conditions, often in makeshift huts without water, electricity and sanitation, in camps in the mountains and forests near the port. Poverty is rife and many have to dig through bins to find enough to eat.

The raids have been constant as migrants are chased out of one temporary home after another. In the latest assault, police raided a camp in a forest near the harbour yesterday (9th), arresting 50 migrants and destroying around 250 huts and tents.

The migrants are also facing an increasingly hostile reaction from city residents. A growing movement protesting the presence of the migrants has been joined by organised fascists and there have been several demonstrations with residents blocking the port. The demos have seen confrontations between the residents, fascists and the migrants. At the start of May, the third such protest - supposedly "For a more human city" - ended in protesters screaming "Burn them! Kill them!" followed by skirmishes between a handful of fascists and a group of migrants.

The attacks on the migrants at Igoumenitsa come at a time of mounting racism around the country. While last month saw anti-migrant pogroms tear through Athens, where around 17% of the population are immigrants, other hotspots such as the western port of Patra have also seen anti-migrant protests.

Unlike in Calais, there is no established, constant activist presence in Igoumenitsa. Activists are calling out for anyone that can to get down there to observe and document police violence as well as provide desperately needed support and solidarity. Contact solidarity_igoumenitsa@yahoo.com

* The situation in Greece will all sound chillingly familiar to those migrants still holed up in Calais. The CRS, alongside an increasingly active PAF (border police) have been maintaining their ceaseless harassment of migrants and increasingly hostile behaviour towards Calais solidarity activists. They are also continuing the piece by piece sealing off and demolition of Africa House, home to many of Calais' African migrants.

Towards the end of last month, around 150 migrants and activists marched through Calais in protest against their treatment. The demo was part of a French national day of action against racist immigration policies called by "D'ailleurs nous sommes d'ici", a collective of people involved in solidarity work with migrants in the town, and supported by No Borders Calais as well as trade union members (SUD and CGT), Lille anarchist group, leftist political party NPA, and others.

In Calais too, activists are thin on the ground and more support is needed.

* See www.calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com

HINKLEY: GONE FRISSION

New nuclear rumbles are afoot as EDF put in a planning application to clear a site for Hinkley C, the first new nuclear development in the UK since Sizewell B in 1988.

The proposed works would clear more than 400 acres of grassland, woodland and hedgerows around the two existing nuclear sites at Hinkley in Somerset. This would involve diverting footpaths; laying drainage infrastructure; constructing car parks, haulage and access roads; the undertaking of massive earthworks, concrete reinforcing and putting in provision for the operation of plant and machinery. And all this before formal permission to actually build the power station has been granted.

Hinkley A was decommissioned and went out of service in 2000, with Hinkley B due to be retired in 2016. After the 2002 UK government moratorium on building any new nuclear facilities, it looked like the same fate would befall all operating nuclear power stations in the UK. However, in 2008 the government announced eight sites they thought suitable for new nuclear. Hinkley is the first to get works underway (see SchNEWS 763).

And it's not just brand-new sites that are going to gobble the uranium. EDF have stated that they're going to extend the lifespan of two of its UK-based nuclear stations by five years, Heysham 1 in Lancashire and Hartlepool power station in County Durham. Both plants were due to shut in 2014, but will now continue until 2019. The company is eyeing up the other five reactors it operates, with Sizewell B in Suffolk potentially being kept open for an additional 20 years.

In response to the application at Hinkley, Stop New Nuclear (an alliance of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Stop Nuclear Power Network, Kick Nuclear, South West Against Nuclear, Trident Ploughshares, Stop Hinkley, Shutdown Sizewell and Sizewell Blockaders) have announced a non-violent blockade of the site on 3rd October. Campaigners are heralding the action as the a definitive moment in the future of nuclear in the UK, stating "If [the industry] fails at Hinkley, it is unlikely the "nuclear renaissance" will have the momentum to continue."

* See www.stopnewnuclear.org.uk



WORKFARE = WELFARE FOR BUSINESSES

NOT PLAYING WORKFARE

Protesters have successfully halted a conference on the government's controversial 'Work Programme' after calling for a demonstration and picket on the first day. The protest was to act as a launchpad for campaign coalition Boycott Workfare, an alliance of anti-cuts and anti-poverty groups, trade unionists, unemployed people and others, who are hailing the cancellation as their first positive achievement. Conference organisers Inside Government pulled the event after worries that the demo would harm their relationship with the venue, the Royal Society. The Work Programme forms part of the Welfare Reform Bill, currently going through the House of Lords, and would force those on unemployment benefits to work up to 30 hours a week in places like Poundland to earn their JSA. This works out as equivalent to £2.25 an hour for those over 25, and a measly £1.78 an hour for those younger.

* See www.boycottworkfare.org

BASILDON BRUSH OFF

In a time of austerity measures, cut backs and job losses, there is one thing government is happy to spend big bucks on - evicting travellers from land they legally own. A recent announcement by the MP for Basildon, John Baron, has confirmed a free flow of funding from central and local government amounting to £9.5million to forcibly remove 500 families from Dale Farm in Essex (see SchNEWS 766). A combined scramble to find the cash from Essex Police Authority, Basildon Borough Council and the Home Office has given the green light to the clearing of the site and ongoing efforts to stop re-occupation. The travellers and campaigners are still waiting for their 28 day eviction notice, after which a determined resistance will be established, aiming to bring hundreds of protesters to Dale Farm to 'Camp Constant', a non-violent human shield, to prevent any eviction.

* See www.dalefarm.wordpress.com

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

1: For inappropriate dance moves...

Back in 2008, 20 people participated in a silent disco flashmob at the Jefferson Memoria. One woman was arrested for dancing. On appeal a U.S. District Judge ruled that all dancing is prohibited in the interior of the memorial as it is a form of protest which "distracts from the atmosphere of solemn commemoration". Last week a number of activists, including Iraq veteran and talk radio host Adam Kokesh, performed their own silent dance to protest the ruling. Park police failed to see the funny side and violently arrested Adam and four others for "Dancing in a Restricted Area".

2: For flying close to the wind ...

Sunday 29th May, two people stood outside the recently re-opened Tesco in Stokes Croft, Bristol. They held a banner and handed out flyers critical of the corporate giant. Having had their sign torn in half and having been harassed by staff and security, the boys in blue turned up to save the day. They then arrested one of the protesters for assaulting a member of staff, despite video footage showing the opposite.

HASTA LA DEMOCRACIA

Two dramatic turns in the Spanish revolution took place this week with five demonstrators arrested in Valencia after protests turned violent, while in Madrid activists decided to dismantle the camp in Puerta del Sol.

Hundreds gathered in Valencia on Wednesday (8th) outside the regional parliament offices to protest against political corruption. Francisco Camps, the now re-elected mayor of the region, is currently under investigation for accepting bribes, along with several other Popular Party politicians. Police attempted to break up the crowd of demonstrators on Thursday morning, resulting in 12 activists being injured, along with eight police officers. Five campaigners were arrested for public disorder and assault, and are still in custody as SchNEWS goes to press.

Wednesday saw large gatherings of protesters in many cities throughout Spain, including the Madrid square which has attracted thousands of 'los indignados' since its beginning on May 15th. After lengthy discussions at the camp on Wednesday evening, it was agreed that the movement would 'restructure' by dismantling the camp and focusing efforts on more localised, smaller groups. Nationwide protests outside town halls have been called for on Saturday (11th), as mayors are sworn into office across the country.

Sunday (19th) has also been set as a date for Europe-wide demonstrations to protest against the signing of the controversial Euro Plus Pact, a list of political reforms supposedly intended to improve the fiscal strength of the country. The agreement has come under fire for austerity measures imposed across the EU such as abolishing wage indexation (wage indexation is the linking of wages with inflation - if this is abolished it allows for wage decreases - supposedly 'increasing competitiveness') and the raising of pension ages. Heads of state in the EU are gathering to sign the agreement on June 27th.

A global protest against political corruption and false democracy has been announced for October 15th.

Most of the smaller solidarity camps that sprung up across the UK and Europe are also deciding to dismantle mass encampments in favour of more localised demonstrations, but as a Spanish camp spokesperson said, "A restructuring does not mean we are dissipating". It's now up to those who took to the streets over the last month to keep the momentum going.

* See www.democraciarealya.es (in Spanish)

SMOOTH OPERATORS

Anti-austerity action group UK Uncut occupied high-street banks across the country last Saturday (4th), in the biggest display so far of direct action against proposed NHS cuts. Despite the rhetoric, the Tory knives are being sharpened for the national health service. Swinging cuts are promised together with a financial restructure that will allow private companies to carve off anything that can turn a quick buck. The hole in the budget is of course nothing compared to the laughably vast sums handed out to bail out the banks.

Dubbed 'The Emergency Operation', the day of action took place in over 35 towns and cities nationwide, with activists dressed in scrubs and armed with fake blood and bandages setting up 'operating theatres' inside branches of the four major banks. Even the unions got in on the act with the PCS union encouraging its members to attend.

* For more on the war against Tory Greed see www.ukuncut.org.uk

GAZA FREEDOM FLOTILLA II

The Freedom Flotilla II is readying itself to set sail for Gaza, a year after the Israeli military assault on the Mavi Marmara that left nine activists dead and over 50 injured (see SchNEWS 725).

The blockade busting ships, manned by campaigners from over 50 countries, will depart from ports around Europe carrying desperately needed supplies alongside messages of solidarity.

Organisers have pushed on with plans for the flotilla despite Israeli assaults with both carrot and stick. While Israel has recently announced it would allow a small increase in the humanitarian aid allowed into Gaza, it has also been threatening another violent response. Leslie Cagan, coordinator of the U.S. Boat to Gaza, said, "We are sailing - despite threats by the Israeli armed forces to use attack dogs and snipers against us - and despite frantic diplomatic pressure by the Israeli government to prevent other countries from allowing the flotilla to sail".

With the Rafah (pedestrian) border with Egypt now open, and after loosening restrictions to let 65% of pre-blockade levels of cargo in, Israel has argued the flotilla is unnecessary. The Free Gaza campaign disagree. In a press release they state:

"Letting in more trucks is not enough. More trucks with food and medicine are only meant to give the appearance of an open Gaza. More trucks does not mean freedom; more trucks does not mean rebuilding the hundreds of homes and buildings that the Israeli military destroyed during Operation Cast Lead. More trucks does not mean Gaza is not occupied and its residents subjected to collective punishment; more trucks does not mean that Israel has ended its cruel blockade; more trucks does not mean that Palestinians are any less imprisoned."

* See www.freegaza.org www.freedomflotilla.eu

UKBA-RMY

Twenty four Iraqis have gone on hunger strike this week in an Oxford detention centre in protest against the government's plans to deport them.

More than 70 refugees are facing deportation to Baghdad and in the last two years Britain has deported 300 Iraqis. There are currently around 3,200 people in immigration detention centres and the UK locks up 20,000 so-called 'illegals' a year - more than any other European country.

The Iraqis are by no means alone in their plight. Betty Tibikawa, a 22 year old Ugandan lesbian, has been denied asylum and is due to be deported back to Uganda, where homosexuality is illegal. Betty was 'outed' in a national newspaper and attacked and beaten before coming to the UK. High profile gay rights activist David Kato was murdered in Uganda in January, and a similar fate could be waiting for Betty.

Edson "Eddy" Cosmas, an openly gay man originally from Tanzania, is being held at Harmondsworth Removal Centre. He is threatened with deportation back to Tanzania where he'd been beaten, stoned, abused and tortured for his sexuality, and where the 'crime' of homosexuality carries up to 30 years imprisonment.

There will be a No One Is Illegal public meeting in Oxford Town Hall on 16th June. In the meantime check <http://barbedwirebritain.wordpress.com>, www.noii.org.uk and www.noborders.org.uk for more info about repression against asylum seekers in Britain.

PARTY & PROTEST

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

SchNEWS In Graphic Detail Is OUT NOW

There will be a combined launch for the book, as well as the new SchMOVIES DVD 'Raiders Of The Lost Archive Vol 2' on June 29th, 8pm at the Cowley Club, Brighton with screenings and live music. Buy the book online now for £6.50 incl P&P see www.schnews.org.uk/books

GM: SOONER OR TATER

On Sunday 30th May 400 anti-GM activists broke through police lines to decontaminate a field of genetically engineered potatoes in Wetterem, Belgium. The protest had been pre-announced by the group 'Field Liberation Movement', and 50 riot cops were surrounding the fenced off field ready and waiting. Despite this, 15 activists made it over the barbed wire using strips of carpet and uprooted a number of crops before being arrested.

Currently, commercial growing of genetically modified crops is banned in the UK, but that's set to change. Even though Genetic Modification has so far proved completely unsuccessful at increasing crop yields, the minister for Food and Environment Caroline Spelman announced that the coalition is committed to being "the most Pro-GM government yet". This is hardly surprising considering she was co-founder and director of Spelman, Cormack and Associates - one of the lobbying companies that have spent the last ten years convincing us that we need GM food to solve the food crisis. Although she resigned as a company director before taking office, the firm remains in the hands of her husband, Mark Spelman.

There are two ongoing GM potato trials in the UK - one at Bramham, Tadcaster conducted by Leeds University and another at John Innes Centre, Norwich conducted by the The Sainsbury Laboratory. So, if you fancy picking some taters for yourself, you know where to go.

* For more info see www.stopgm.org.uk

...and finally...

Big Shout Out to Owen Chir of Hillgrove PR for providing us with this vital story:

British celebrity couple receive top American environmental award

Think the planet's heading down the tubes with alarming rapidity? Well fear not - this week Sting and his 'actress' wife Trudie Styler are heading up the struggle to save our Earth, this fragile bubble of life in an uncaring cosmos. They, along with Bill Clinton, were rewarded for their efforts with a personal presentation of the "Big Fish" award for their "extraordinary contributions to environmental protection".

But being galactic class stars, there was just no time for tunnelling or tree-sitting in the celebrity couple's red carpet lifestyle. Trudie's main contribution to preserving this precious green oasis from the maniacal energies of industro-capitalism has been to launch a range of ready meals, which "in keeping with their philosophy of staying lean and green despite their jet-setting lifestyle" come with a ...wait for it "delicious non-heat-treated sauce and a potato side dish". Now if that doesn't avert full-blown Ecogeddon then we don't know what will.

Allegedly concocted at the kitchen table of Sting's fuck-off massive mansion in Wiltshire, the dinners are intended "as a boon for busy professionals who enjoy wholesome fresh food, but don't have time to prepare it themselves after a long day".

We at SchNEWS can only salute such selfless dedication to the biosphere and wish to remind the happy couple "Every move you make, every step you take - we'll be watching you"

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all green-washed press officers, fuck off, no seriously, fuck off. Honest.

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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