



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER BORDERING ON THE INSANE...

SchNEWS

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ROLLING OUT THE UNWELCOME MAT NO ASYLUM HERE AS SCHEWS MOURNS CUTS TO MIGRANT LEGAL AID

The closure of the Immigration Advisory Service (IAS) on Monday (11th), following new legislation denying legal aid for all immigration cases, has left hundreds of migrants and asylum seekers without legal support.

The service had been running for 35 years from London and regional offices, with 300 employees. At the time of the shock closure - which staff discovered via notices on doors when they turned up for work - there were 650 active cases. Claimants are now being told to ask courts for their hearings to be delayed and to find themselves alternative legal representation.

The charity's collapse into administration is the latest assault on migrants facing deportation, stuck in a legal system designed to encourage failure. Three quarters of asylum claims are refused by the Home Office - but of those who can appeal, a quarter of the rash and politically-motivated decisions are overturned at Independent Tribunal. For the government, it's easier to just shut 'em up and send 'em packing than follow through on their hollow commitments to access to justice and human rights.

In June 2010 the then biggest refugee legal service, **Refugee and Migrant Justice**, was forced to close despite being owed £1.8mil-

lion by the government in legal aid dough for concluded cases. Amongst the thousands of asylum seekers left out in the cold were hundreds of children alone in the UK and trafficking victims.

RMJ and the Immigration Advisory Service have not only achieved justice for thousands of people and their families but have often embarrassed the government and the UKBA in the process. The IAS recently won an injunction to stop 'failed' asylum seekers from being deported back to Iraq.

The slashing of legal aid for migration, refugee and asylum cases is part of the government's **Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill**. The fast-tracked bill also includes making family, welfare, employment, clinical negligence and housing cases illegible (well, consultation and due process ain't the Coalition's style - although they might just u-turn into it later if put under enough pressure).

The Legal Services Commission, which oversees legal aid provision, says on its website it's "committed to playing its part in delivering these reforms, to ensure there is a sustainable legal aid scheme for the future, targeted at those who need help most." Except



NO THEY WON'T LET YOU IN.. THEY ONLY SEEM TO MARRY FOR RICHER OR RICHER HERE IN THE UK...

those being forced back to torture and persecution, harassed at work, denied access to their children or made homeless, apparently.

Not content with allowing essential legal services for migrants to fall through the net, the government's latest 'crackdown' on allowing people in to the country will be based on - yep! - how much money they've got in the bank.

New Home Office proposals would enforce a minimum income threshold for anyone wanting to sponsor a spouse, partner or dependent to come to the UK. If your loved one earns less than £5,000 a year, you're not comin' in. The government is now in the fourth phase of its plans to cut immigration to below 100,000 a year. As well as the income limits, the White Paper also proposes the probation period for spouses and partners to be upped from two years to five, and encourages people to send money abroad to elderly relatives rather than bring them into the country.

Even the convention on human rights isn't safe. Ministers are scheming to change the wording on article 8 of the document, which concerns the right to family life. That change would mean that even husbands and wives who have been recognised as genuine would be liable for deportation if they were found to be living 'illegally' in the UK.

* Always plenty of immigration status reports at www.ncadc.org.uk

GAZA FLOTILLA: SEIGE YOU LATER

It's looking as if the planned flotilla to Gaza has run aground on Greek intransigence. Weeks after they were due to sail, the ships are still being held in Greek harbours. In one way it's a testament to the Israeli government's fear of the lifting of the Gazan siege that they've gone to such lengths to prevent a small amount of humanitarian aid reaching the Gaza Strip by sea.

Since the Mavi Marmara debacle in 2010 (see SchNEWS 725) when Israeli commandos shot and killed nine activists and stormed the entire fleet to prevent it reaching port, the Israeli authorities have been desperate to avoid another high seas showdown.

This time round tactics have been far sneakier. One boat at least has been the victim of mysterious sabotage. Pressure on the Greek government has led to an embargo on the flotilla leaving. The Greek and Israeli governments are strongly allied - carrying out joint military manoeuvres on a regular basis and with the Greeks buying Israeli military technology.

Nine vessels, including two cargo ships, are still blocked in various Greek ports, while the Irish ship Saoirse is in a Turkish port undergoing repairs for alleged sabotage suffered two weeks ago. One U.S ship cheekily dubbed the 'Audacity of Hope', carrying 36 passengers,

four crew and about 10 members of the media, attempted to run the blockade on the same day it was announced, and was seized by Greek commandos. The captain, John Klusmire, is being held in custody charged with "trying to leave port without permission and of endangering the lives of passengers."

Not all the obstruction has taken place on the water. The bizarre saga of 'Marc' show the lengths the Israelis are prepared to go to. A month or so ago a Youtube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhmBbGFJleU> video started doing the rounds. It purported to be the story of an LGBT activist who decided to get involved with the Freedom Flotilla as he felt they must be a cross between 'Che Guevara and Mother Teresa'. He was then apparently asked to leave the flotilla on account of his sexuality. In fact the whole thing was a hoax - Marc is none other than Israeli actor Omer Gershon and the video nothing more than a blatant attempt at pinkwashing the occupation.

Flotilla activists have vowed not to give up the struggle and are organising demos outside Greek embassies across the world.

* To find a demo near you - <http://gaza-freedom-march.org/cms/en/Solidarity/events-map.aspx>

* To follow events www.freegaza.org

DON'T MANSION IT

Closed with a bang! Clifton Mansions in Brixton was evicted on Wednesday (13th) with a Facebook party thrown in for good measure. The historic London squat was once the bed-chamber of Irish punk-folk band The Pogues and Turner Prize-winning artist Jeremy Deller.

The building had been squatted for over a decade, one of the longest lasting squatting communities in the area but the council decided to crack down on anti-social behaviour (they've obviously never lived in a squat, they are really quite sociable places). They were given notice a few weeks ago. Waiting in earnest for the coming onslaught, some residents decided to hold an eviction party, get support and spread the word through Facebook.

Things ended up out of control as hundreds of people showed up with no clue to what the event was about, partied hard and trashed the place much to the occupants' dismay. By 8am most of the revellers had moved on to greener pastures, the dedicated supporters that remained started to build a barricade by the main entrance. That's when the thugs arrived. The police operation consisted of riot police, a helicopter, fire brigade and bailiffs. The council is going to sell the property on and employ live-in guardians (tax payers' money well spent) until they sell. There was one arrest for assaulting police and lots more homeless people.

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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NOT THE FULL ENGLISH

Last Saturday (9th) saw far-right knuckledraggers, the English Defence League, stage four regional demos in Middlesbrough, Halifax, Cambridge and Plymouth. There had also been one planned for Derby, but the fash bottled it. Generally counter-demos were better attended and more lightly policed than their far-right counterparts, perhaps partly due to the EDL's new policy of not cooperating with police (see SchNEWS 776).

The Middlesbrough and Halifax ED actions drew around 300-400 each. Cambridge managed a couple of hundred (though this was dwarfed by a counter-demo more than four times the size), but it was Plymouth that won the prize for most farcical protest of the week.

It didn't look good in the run-up, with EDL infighting meaning other South West divisions were actually telling members not to go. A breakdown in communication meant two different meeting points split the already small turnout, with around 60 waiting at the official start and end pub (Wild Coyote, Exeter St - in case you were wondering) and others kettled on the Hoe. With help from the police, EDL stewards managed to round up supporters, swelling their numbers to almost 200.

Meanwhile, up to 500 hundred counter-demonstrators gathered in Jigsaw Gardens (the opposite side of the city). With the Unite Against Fascism event seemingly more focused on Labour politicians and union leaders giving speeches about "smashing the EDL" and the EDL themselves surrounded by twice the number of police - the prospect of actually smashing the EDL was never particularly high.

Portsmouth will see the next regional EDL demo on Saturday (16th). Not having to compete with other divisions, and the sell-out crowd expected for the Chelsea - Portsmouth friendly the same day, the turnout is expected to be higher. However, with groups of autonomous antifascists and unaligned locals determined to defend their town, it could be an interesting situation.

Portsmouth - Antiracists will assemble at 12 noon in the Guildhall Square on Saturday 16th July.

As SchNEWS goes to print the EDL website is still offline having been targeted by hacktivists last week, a fact they seem unwilling to admit, saying only that it "is undergoing redevelopment". When it finally returns, we can expect more bragging about how they are going to invade Tower Hamlets on 3rd September. Whether this actually happens remains to be seen - the EDL cancelled Tower Hamlets last year fearing "a suicide mission". If they actually make it this time around, antifascists will be keen to prove them right.

INSIDE SchNEWS

Seven anti-fascists were found guilty of 'conspiracy to violent disorder' at Blackfriars Crown Court two weeks ago. The charges related to a dust-up with Blood&Honour skinheads at Wellington train station in 2009 (perhaps taking the 'No Platform' stance a little too literally). Six were sent immediately to Wormwood Scrubs, five given 21 months and another is awaiting sentence. We're not gonna say any more because there's an upcoming trial of another eleven in September. They deserve your support.

All are at HMP Wormwood Scrubs PO Box 757 Du Cane Rd London W12 OAE

Andy Baker (21 months) A5768CE, Thomas Blak (Unsentenced) A5728CE, Sean Cregan (21 months) A5769CE, Phil De Sousa (21 months) A5766CE, Ravinder Gill (21 months) A5770CE, Austen Jackson (Unsentenced) A5729CE

LIKE IT OR LUMPUR IT

We had the Arab spring - what about one in South East Asia? Not if the Malaysian government has anything to do with it. On July 9th, the 'elected' dictatorship stamped aggressively on a peaceful mass demo in capital, Kuala Lumpur, organised by a leftist collective group called BERSIH (Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections). And with the same 'National Front' party having been in power since independence in 1957 they've surely got a point.

But the city was swiftly in full-on Police State mode as 7,000 cops with helicopter support attempted to lock down the centre, blocking public transport and access routes. They attacked peaceful marchers (estimated at more than 20,000 by participants and only 6,000 by cops) with major tear gas assaults, also making mass arrests (around 1,500) and undertaking arbitrary searches of buildings and hotels looking for march supporters. All the left leaning politicians and organisation leaders had already been arrested before the demo began but the majority of marchers managed to organise themselves and rally round to protect each other from the worst of the police onslaught.

This isn't the first time people have taken to the streets in Kuala Lumpur - there were two big demos in 2007 that the state responded to in a similar fashion and the regime continues to send its people a stern message: Freedom? Don't even think about it, you must thing we were Borneo yesterday...

* For more see www.bersih.org

ROTTEN FRUIT

Israel's largest exporter of fruit and veg is in dire straits this week as the debt-riddled corporation saw its CEO resign.

Carmel Agrexco has long been under fire by campaigners for its direct support of illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine. Agrexco employs Palestinian workers and a Thai migrant labour force to tend Israeli-owned crops in many areas that have been occupied illegally by Israel. The wages are well below the national average and workers are often subjected to humiliating treatment as they attempt to pass checkpoints to get to Agrexco's fields and packing houses.

Agrexco lost just under £30million in 2010, and a state bailout of nearly £10million in December 2010 has done little to alleviate the corporation's financial problems. The company has been through restructuring upheaval in the last few years as, in 2008, Agrexco joined the ranks of Israeli state-owned companies sold off for privatisation. The combined forces of worldwide recession, loss of market share and a bad year of harvests have been blamed for the collapse, and the company's bondholders are demanding their £28million debt to be paid. Tnuva, formerly a kibbutz co-operative owned organisation, sold off to London-based private equity firm Apax Partners in 2006, owns 11% of Agrexco and has so far been the only major shareholder voicing a willingness to inject capital to keep the company going. The Plant Production and Marketing Board, a quango representing farmers with a 55% share has refused, as has the Israeli state, who own 30%.

The UK Agrexco depot in Hayes, Middlesex has been repeatedly targeted over the years by activists (See SchNEWS 709, 666, 597, 585...). Seven protesters who blockaded and occupied the depot in 2006 were later acquitted in court after the case was kicked out, but not before Agrexco were forced to reveal where their products came from. Since then, the corporation hasn't prosecuted any demonstrators who have done actions at the depot.

LYONS LED BY DONKEYS

Michael Lyons served as a medical assistant submariner for six years before he was expelled from the navy for thinking and feeling. He was due to begin a two-week rifle course at HMS Excellent, a shore base in Portsmouth, last September but refused pre-deployment, asking instead to be put to a non-combat role.

In court he confirmed he had all his physical and mental faculties, and his objections to orders rose from personal convictions not madness. Well we've got a live one. "My initial objections started with Afghanistan and I wanted to investigate the reasons why we were at war. At the time WikiLeaks came along and mentioned Iraq and Afghanistan. The reports said there had been some civilian casualties that nobody knew about and they were being covered up," he said.

Lyons had already been told he couldn't treat Afghan civilians, which added to his uneasiness about going to war. Apparently medics cannot have such scruples but just be good at putting up and shutting up - and learning how to shoot people. To put more froth in the juice the appeal as a conscientious objector status "probably" failed due to him being an atheist rather than an ordinary God fearing good little boy. Lyons was ordered to see a Chaplain despite his anti-religious convictions, after which the Chaplain stated it was a political, rather than a moral objection. Without the defence that he was refusing on religious grounds, this conscientious person was found guilty of disobeying a lawful order at his court martial in Plymouth on Tuesday (5th).

C'MON BUNNY LIGHT MY FIRE

The campaign against Highgate Farm, the Lincolnshire vivisection breeders, was ratcheted up a notch last Tuesday. A van on site was torched and the conservatory of the farmhouse set on fire. Activists left the following threat "We will continue to watch you and you will never know when we will strike next. Rest assured, while you profit from this disgusting genocide, we will be there to make you experience just a tiny amount of the fear that you help to cause to those innocent, beautiful creatures. ... We will get more serious, we promise to make it our goal to stop you once and for all, don't make the mistake of underestimating us, we will not back down. Until the next visit..." - The Provisional RSPCA.

Highgate Farm, which breeds ferrets and rabbits for the vivisection industry, has been the target of a sustained campaign since 2008 (see SchNEWS 735)

* See www.closehighgatefarm.com

...and finally...

"We walked in the cold air, freezing breath on a window pane. Lying and waiting, a man in the dark in a picture frame." The lyrics from seminal 80s new wave anthem 'Vienna' have little to do with this story, but there is a man from Vienna in it and he appears in a picture frame - on his driving licence - wearing a sieve on his head; a piece of headwear - even the suave Midge Urgh couldn't make look cool.

Niko Alm did it in protest at Austrian laws which state that only the religiously committed can wear head coverings in official photos. So he declared himself a 'pastafarian' and fought for three years to win the right to sport a colander in worship of the durum wheat foodstuff. Authorities showed a lazy racist stereotyped lack of a sense of humour about the whole thing, but had to eventually relent as the regulations say that as long as the facial area is uncovered, anything goes. It must have been a strain, but at least Niko eventually proved that the penne is mightier than the word.

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