

KEEP THE FIRES BURNING

A NEWSLETTER BY AND FOR CALIFORNIA PRISONERS

¡Tenemos una versión en español de este boletín informativo! Por favor escríbanos si quiere una copia de esta edición o una edición previa, o si quiere ser agregado a nuestra lista de correo.

ASK FOR STORIES OF ORGANIZING AND SOLIDARITY

We at AboSol have been reaching out to people on both sides of the walls to try to collect some personal stories. We're looking to hear from you about times you've experienced prisoners working together to push back against the prison system in ways big and small, successes and failures, lessons learned, ideas to try again, inspiration that you turn to when things seem hopeless... Lay it on us! And if you are okay with us publishing them, please make a note of that, we'll keep it anonymous.

IN THE NEWS

Hunger Strike at Red Onion State Prison

Beginning on December 26, 2023, up to 30 prisoners in solitary confinement at Virginia's Red Onion State Prison went on hunger strike to protest the continued use of torturous long-term solitary confinement. Despite critical concern, outcry from the public and prisoners in the state, incarcerated people are still subjected to this brutal practice which has been renamed "restorative housing" since July 1, 2023 when measures were passed to limit its use in the state. In other words, VDOC changed the name and NOT the practice.

Leading these prisoners in this effort is longtime prison activist, revolutionary writer and artist, Kevin "Rashid" Johnson. Rashid stated that no one would take any food at all until demands are met. Red Onion prisoncrats even formed a hunger strike committee that retaliated against the strikers by cutting off all communications that they could including phone access, emails, visitation, and even legal calls.

"We have to protect Rashid because he fights for all of us," said Shupavu wa Kirima, a leader of Rashid's outside support, on January 18. Rashid has reported on conditions at Red Onion for over a decade. Rashid and his comrades, several of whom also have chronic health conditions, put their health at risk to demand an end to sensory deprivation and torture.

There was a nationwide phone zap on January 23 targeting multiple DOC offices and the VA governor. As of March 4th, Rashid has disappeared from the inmate locator, however in the days since, supporters have reported a tentative victory. Rashid is in the process of finally being transferred out of Red Onion and into a facility closer to where he can receive medical treatment. The struggle against long term solitary confinement however is far from over.

Political Prisoner Eric King Was Released from Prison Last Month After Spending Nearly 10 Years Behind Bars!

Eric was arrested in Kansas City in 2014 during the Ferguson uprisings, the national uprising that took place in response to the police killing of Black teenager Mike Brown. His crime was throwing a Molotov cocktail at an empty federal building. During his near decade inside he weathered many attacks from guards, and white supremacist prisoners largely owing to his out-spoken anti fascism. He is very happy to be out, and is now doing paralegal work for movement lawyers, speaking about his experiences and organizing inside, and recently published a book uplifting the voices of many other political prisoners.



IN MEMORIAM

Rise In Power Ruchell Cinque Magee



My Dear & Departed Brother Ruchell Cinque Magee,

While I did not know you personally, I knew you culturally. While I never met you in this life, I have met you in our historical life. While I never spoke to you in person, I did speak with you in spirit. While I do not know your story, I do know your story because your story is our story. The story of an oppressed people in the divided states of America.

The same types of things that have happened to you by these oppressors are the same types of things that are happening to me, and to Mumia Abu-Jamal and to so many other Sisters and Brothers in this country. You are not alone in this, not even while you rest eternally. It's important for all of us to acknowledge that you lived, that you fought, and you struggled, and that you died as a Man in a country where you were not wanted. You're now at Peace and with our ancestors who will protect you going forward. So rest in Peace and in Power and know that you will not be forgotten.

You cannot be forgotten because you are us, and we are you!
In Struggle & Solidarity, Your Brother Kevin Cooper

Rise In Power Ed Poindexter



Political prisoner Ed Poindexter passed away on December 7th after 53 years in prison and after being denied parole four times. Ed Poindexter was a member of the Black Panther Party and was arrested as part of the notoriously violent and egregious COINTELPRO. He maintained his innocence throughout his life and accomplished many things while behind bars. He obtained multiple degrees, and taught classes on everything from Black history and culture to others geared toward helping men turn away from domestic violence.

Rise In Power Sekou Odinga



Sekou Odinga was a member of Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity, as well as the Black Panther Party in New York City and the Black Liberation Army. He was instrumental in Assata Shakur's escape to Cuba and for his actions served 33 years in state and federal prison before being released in 2016. Here are just a few words of wisdom from his lifelong revolutionary legacy:

"What attracted me more than anything else was the stand against police brutality, because, like all the other ghettos in this country or Black areas of this country, police brutality was running rampant. ... That was the attraction, the big attraction, for me, personally, and many of the comrades that I came in with, because they really — we were not part of the civil rights movement to turn your other cheek. We was mostly followers of the Malcolm X position that if someone smack you, you smack him back; if someone punch you, you punch him back; that your life was the biggest and best thing you had, and you had a right to not only protect it, but to defend it by any means necessary." (Democracy Now 2016)

"Will I be remembered? I don't really care. Let's be real. What I care about are my children and you children, and the children of tomorrow. I want them to study the past and learn about it and carry on. Because America has only gotten worse. It has. At some point, it's gonna fall. Because all empires fall. It's on its way right now. There's not going to be any America in 50 years. There's not. And the youth of today has to be ready to pick up the pieces when that happens." (Millenials are Killing Capitalism 2020)

Screaming at the Gates: A Reportback from the New Year's Eve Noise Demo at CMF Vacaville

**Published by Abolition Media,
1/9/2024**

In keeping with tradition, abolitionists from around the Bay Area converged on New Year's Eve to hold a noise demo at the front gates of California Medical Facility (CMF), a prison in Vacaville that holds approximately 2000 people captive (mostly disabled, immunocompromised, or in recovery, many elderly). The group numbered around 30-40 and was heard from inside certain parts of the prison, according to several reports. The entrance gate where the action took place was adjacent to a neighborhood, from which a lot of people came out to film and take supportive interest in the event. In between statements and words, we blasted music that echoed throughout the prison property and the surrounding neighborhood. Songs ranged from local classics such as "Punk Police" by Mac Dre to anti-police bangers such as "I Have a Dream, Too" by Dead Prez (a song that famously lists the names of abolitionist martyrs such as George Jackson, Yogi Pinell, and Ruchell Cinque Magee).

Two banners were raised on the fences by the prison entrance; one read "FUCK CDCR", the other "FREE THE PEOPLE/FREE THE LAND/BURN THE PLANTATION". The banner colors were red, black and green on an off-white banner, to show appreciation both for our New Afrikan comrades in the prison, and to draw connections between the struggle against the U.S. white supremacist settler State and resistance to the genocidal Zionist occupation of Palestine. We added pink to the banners to signify solidarity with queer and trans prisoners in CDCR, and solidarity with the survivors of FCI Dublin (another scandalous Bay Area prison). Some of the prison's signs were redecorated with markers, adding "Fuck the" to the CDCR title, crossing out rehabilitation, and changing the word "medical" to "torture" in the title of the facility.

Speeches were made through a megaphone and wheeled sound system. People who have been involved in support efforts for some

comrades imprisoned at CMF shared about the conditions inside this specific facility. Echoing across the premise, they recited facts such as an account of the recent string of targeted raids conducted by a group of guards, who have been planting drugs and items deemed contraband in the cells of Black and Brown prisoners.

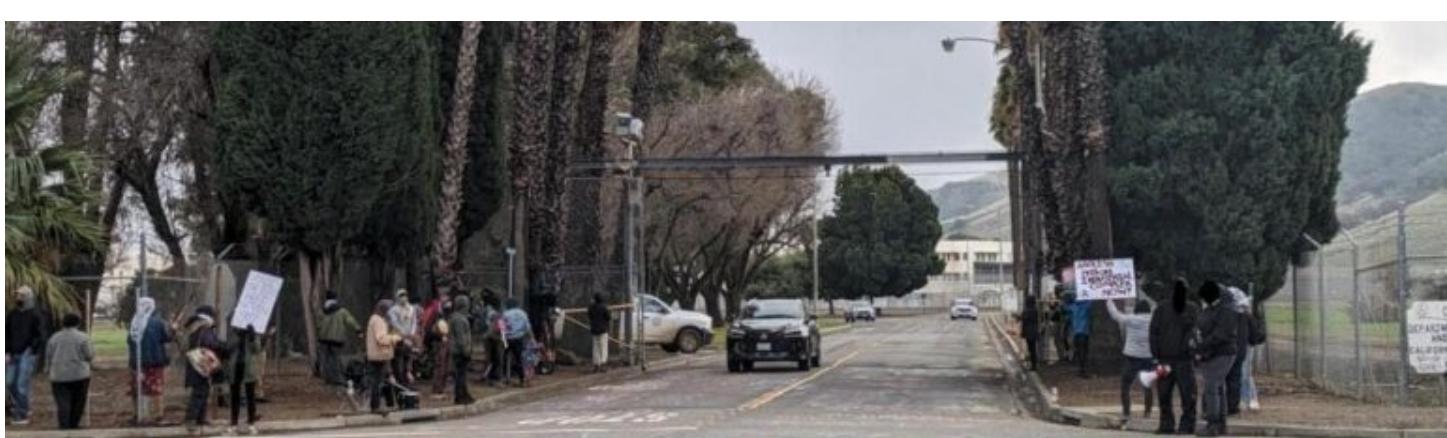
Attention was also brought to particular violations of Black women in the visiting rooms, with cops forcing women who wear wigs to remove them from their heads prior to entering for bogus "drug searches." This, the speaker explained, is part of a pattern of racially-concerted antiBlack harassment in the visiting process at CMF. Black prisoners and their loved ones over the past year have also been frequently subjected to punishment for expressing policy-sanctioned and legally-permitted acts of romantic intimacy. One example in recent months is the suspension of visits for a Black couple as retaliation for sharing a kiss before departing at the end of a recent visit. This heightened control of specifically Black prisoners and visitors persists throughout the entire visitation process, amounting to a systematic attack on Black intimacy and bodily integrity.

Abolitionist organizers are preparing to begin a phone zap and focused campaign, rooted in the principles of autonomous direct action, that addresses these specific conditions by targeting institutional pressure points of CMF/CDCR.

Comrades spoke out in honor of Ruchell Cinque Magee who spent the end of his very long sentence at CMF, only to pass within months of his release. Cinque was the longest held political prisoner in the U.S. to date, imprisoned for 67 years and punished for his unyielding resistance to the prison regime. The speaker who commemorated Cinque also spoke about the past decade of a resurgent Prisoner Movement, which between 2010 and 2020 has brought into motion a decade of insurgency, prisoner uprisings and large-scale (statewide and nationwide) strikes that have dramatically advanced the trajectory of abolitionist struggles today.

With this resurgent phase of rebellion in mind, we are reminded of our departed comrade Cole, who answered the Oakland Abolition & Solidarity phone line when prisoners called for many years, and who passed in 2022. He was with us the entire day in the form of the Black and Red flags that he used to carry to action after action.

We decided to hold the noise demo for about an hour and then collectively bounce to evade getting stopped by Vacaville PD.



We intentionally planned the demo to start when visitation was ending, so as to impact prisoners as little as possible and to be seen by visitors leaving the prison. Cars continued to stream in and out of the prison gate; some waving as they passed, others honking and cheering us on.

Two different people from the neighborhood came up to our group to express support and that they had loved ones inside of CMF. One person was on the phone with their husband and shared that he could hear everything we were saying from his location in the prison. Both people were very excited that we were out there and very excited to connect. Another comrade from inside reported they could hear us from the yard, and also heard someone doing donuts in a car on the other side of the prison.

Our emphasis was on reminding people inside the prison that if they take collective action, there is an outside movement that is working to support them. "You Are Not Alone" was the rallying cry and underlying message shared to comrades held captive in CMF. We showed out not simply as a symbolic gesture of solidarity. We showed out to directly affirm, in person, at the entrance of this facility, that there is an existing support network of autonomous groups, people, platforms and community forums that can support them if they take direct action against the prison.

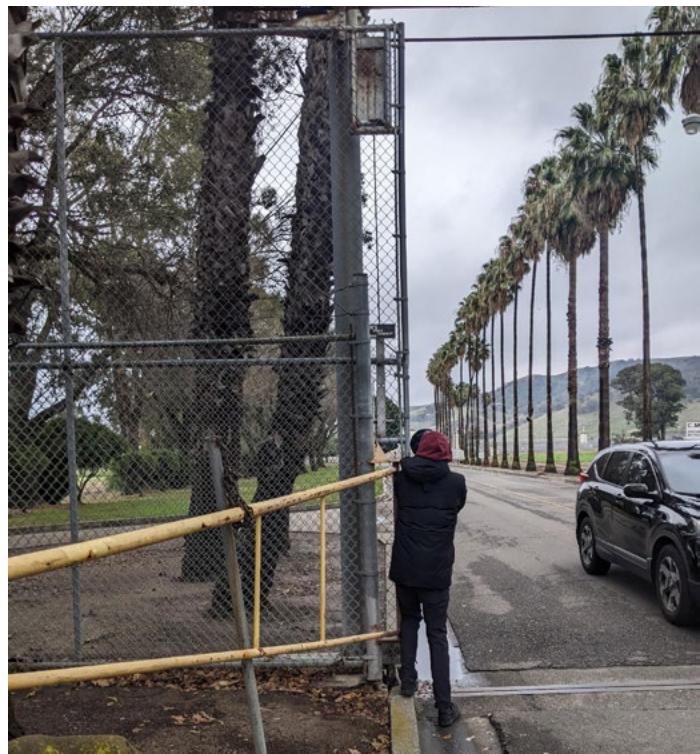
Whether it is the need for phone zaps to expose or challenge a particular normalized abusive practice, or the need for material support during collective actions such as work or hunger strikes, we have been diligent rebuilding a decentralized abolitionist network that can support such actions.

Actions like these are an important part of building a culture of resistance on both sides of the walls, wherever you exist in this carceral hellscape. Going out to the prisons for a noise demonstration means something no matter what, but it is a surreal kind of experience when you know people on the other side of the wall. We encourage more groups who work with imprisoned people, their loved ones, and other support groups to rally numbers in their networks this year, to continue building with others who have loved ones inside, and to organize noise demos at the prisons, jails, and detention centers for occasions beyond only New Year's Eve. Think toward Black August. Think longer term.

At the end of the day, a number of people involved in the demo met to share a meal and reflect. Among those in attendance, there was an overwhelming sense of motivation and direction to seize initiative over the coming years, and push the limits of what is currently imagined possible with regards to demo-actions at the prison gates. There was a sense, shared by some, that we could have stayed out there for much longer than an hour.

For future consideration, we are calling on all to reconsider the potential role and function of demo-actions within a broader abolitionist anti-prison strategy, and to experiment with the infinite array of tools and tactics that can be drawn upon when descending upon these gulag camps. We encourage people to continue re-building a revolutionary abolitionist movement in the Bay Area and beyond. Be safe, stay dangerous.

– some abolitionists



Note from AboSol: Here is the text of one of the statements read out for the whole of CMF and the surrounding neighborhood to hear:

"Happy new year, friends. I wrote down some things I want to share. I hope you can hear this. I have friends and comrades here in CMF and I hope ya'll can hear the noise even if you can't hear my words, and that you can pick up on the feelings in these words through the noise alone!"

"I want you to know that you are not alone. CDCr would want you to think that. You spend so many hours locked away in your cell, physically as alone as anyone can be. But I want you to know that we are with you spiritually, even as these walls keep us apart physically. These walls are not going to stand for as long as they would have you think."

"The cruelty of this place is unimaginable. We know that CMF has a long history of neglecting and abusing its massive elderly population. We want to send love to our elders, alive and dead, and love to those who have been down for decades now. We learn so much from you; we are standing on the shoulders of giants."

"We have lost so many people this year. Ruchelle Magee was here at CMF before he was finally released, and then passed away this fall. We know that many in CMF took care of him. Ruchelle fought for revolution, for abolition, and he never compromised or wavered on his principles, no matter how much they tried to beat him down and make him submit. In the spiritual sense, he died still on his feet. He was the longest held political prisoner in the U.S. in the 21st century. To quote George Jackson, "They will never count me among the broken men."

"Gavin Newsome is claiming that his administration is making prisons more humane. This is obviously a bid to try to clean up the image of the California prison system, a system whose reputation has plummeted in recent years in part as a result of the work of prisoners to shed light



On Palestine

Since our last newsletter, the uprising of Palestinians against the 75 year long Israeli occupation and the intensification of the ongoing genocide has been the primary thing occupying the hands and minds of most free world abolitionists. We know that one of the purposes of prisons is to stop information from flowing freely and to keep prisoners in the dark, with the only reliable access to news coming from mainstream U.S. propaganda networks. With this in mind, Oakland AboSol members want to share some information and analysis about what's really been going on so ya'll can stay informed.

There has been a massive popular global movement in support of Palestinian liberation, the largest in the U.S. at least since the 2020 uprisings. Huge swaths of the U.S. population have turned out to the streets; countless numbers of strikes, blockades, and acts of sabotage have been popping up like mushrooms all over the U.S. to try to disrupt the gears of the war machine.

We are sharing this with you in part because Palestinian liberation and prisoner liberation struggles have long been interconnected. Huey Newton visited Palestine in the 1960s. In 2013, Palestinian baker and political prisoner Khader Adnan expressed solidarity with the California hunger strikes, stating *"I announce my full solidarity with my 30,000 oppressed brothers in the American prisons and I ask that the American people and the government end the policy of isolation of the detainees and the prisoners, and comply by human rights law that forbids continuous isolation because of its destructive effects on the mental and physical health of detainees."* Khader Adnan passed on May 2, 2023 following an 87-day hunger strike.



Organizers in the Bay are standing firmly in solidarity with the people of Palestine.

-LAX

This piece is our best attempt at sharing a summary of events and our basic analysis of what it all means. We've also shared a letter released by the national prisoners' movement in Palestine so ya'll can read their words directly. We are not trying to be "objective" and we are not trying to cite all our sources, though we have done our best to be thorough and accurate. The best and most reliable media has been produced by people on the ground in Gaza, largely on social media, and we've worked to summarize it. Our intention is to share the understanding that is broadly held by people in the movement so that ya'll can engage and be kept in the conversation that we on the outside have been having for these past five months.

Note: All the information presented here is accurate to the best of our abilities as of 3/14/2024

SOME BACKGROUND

What is known as "Israel" is a European settler colony occupying stolen Palestinian land on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean sea. The state of Israel is an outcome of British colonial forces making a deal with the Zionist movement to partition the former Ottoman Empire after World War I. Zionism is a European colonial movement that began in the late 1800s. Zionism aimed to create a Jewish state through colonization, buying into the antisemitic idea that Jewish people do not belong in Europe (the same bigoted logic held by the Nazis and other far-right movements). Before selecting Palestine, Zionists contemplated colonizing part of the African continent in what today is Kenya and Uganda. By offering Palestine to the Zionist movement, British and European colonial forces capitalized on the unspeakable trauma of the holocaust to create a European settler state in the so-called Middle East to serve as a foothold of Western power and influence in the region.

In 1948, the United Nations approved the plan to partition Palestine. Zionist military and paramilitary forces then forcibly expelled Palestinians from their homes in what is called the Nakba (Arabic for "catastrophe"). This ethnic cleansing was described as a "shattering of Palestinian society." Thousands of Palestinians were massacred and many raped by Israeli solidiers. Over 750,000 people were expelled or forced to flee as refugees in other countries, prevented by Israel from ever returning. Another at least 150,000 became internally displaced refugees within the new borders of Israel and were subject to martial law and second class citizenship.

Hundreds of towns were destroyed or completely depopulated, buildings were looted, cultural artifacts were destroyed, and the Palestinian names of places were changed to Hebrew names. The name "Palestine" was removed from maps and books across the world.



From 1948 to now, Israel has continued its aggression, with ongoing takeover of Palestinian land; destruction of Palestinian native ecosystems; torture, imprisonment, and massacres of its people; and destructions of its infrastructure, holy sights, and cultural memory.

The Gaza Strip and the West Bank are two parts of occupied Palestine that are not completely controlled or administered by the occupation. Gaza is described by many to be essentially an open air prison—a small strip of land 25 miles long and 7 miles across, with one of the world's highest population densities. Gaza is walled in and blockaded by Israel by land, sea, and air, and subject to constant Israeli military surveillance, raids, and indiscriminate violence.

The Israeli military receives billions of dollars per year from the U.S. (in 2023 a record \$38 billion) in order to continue its occupation of Palestine and defend Western imperialist interests in the region. The U.S. military (the largest in the world) backs Israel on the world stage and Israeli military technology and training is exchanged with U.S. police forces. The Israeli military is known for being on the cutting edge of surveillance and control technology and tactics, and much of the new methods being deployed in U.S. prisons or to subdue U.S. political movements were created and tested by the Israeli military. Israel is the largest police training ground for colonial forces globally.

To this day, the Zionist project is a key part of holding and expanding Western control of the region, including controlling oil and natural gas reserves from the regions near Palestine. In 1986, then-U.S. Senator and current U.S. President Joe Biden said "[Supporting Israel] is the best \$3 billion investment we make. Were there not an Israel, the United States of America would have to invent an Israel to protect her interests in the region."

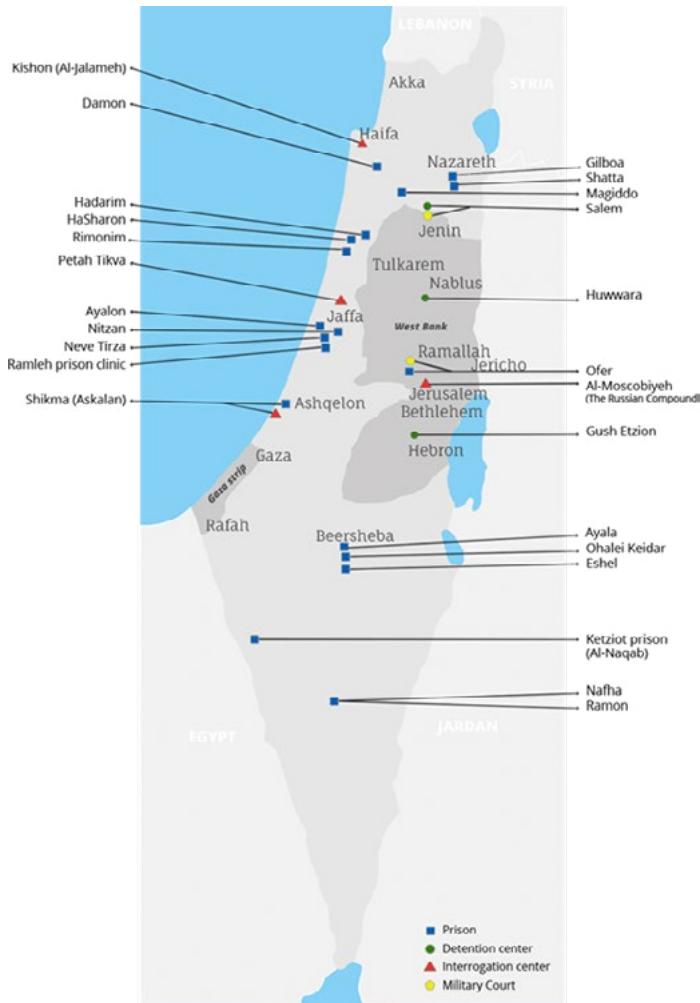
The Palestinian national liberation movement has developed through many stages of struggle that have tactically included general strikes, international solidarity campaigns, economic and cultural boycotts of Israel, asymmetrical guerrilla warfare, and more. The history is long and more involved than we can relate here. Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law, but are allowed to expand with direct financial support from conservative Jewish and Christian Zionist groups in the United States.

For as long as there has been colonial occupation of Palestine, there's been resistance to it. The Palestinian liberation movement has a long and rich history with strong ties to liberation movements in the U.S., Ireland, and across the world.

OCTOBER 7TH TO NOW

On October 7th 2023, a coalition of militant organizations in Gaza (Hamas among them) launched an attack on Israel using improvised tools like paragliders and fans to fly over the Gaza walls, and bulldozers to knock them down. This breakout, known as the Al-Aqsa Flood, was the first time in the history of conflict over the Zionist occupation that the death toll on the Israeli side was initially higher than on the Palestinian side.

Soon after October 7th, the Israeli military started a massive cam-



A map of occupied Palestine and the Israeli prison infrastructure throughout it, published by Addameer.

paign of incredible military violence on the people it has trapped in the Gaza strip. In keeping with Israeli military doctrine, the response has been grossly disproportionate and horrific. We on the outside have been bearing witness to these atrocities. Words cannot describe what's being done.

Since 10/7 the Israeli military has at minimum killed 31,774, injured 73,134, and effectively depopulated northern Gaza. The mainstream narrative refuses to call this a genocide, insists upon the condemnation of Hamas, and shrouds the naked truth in layers of mystification.

Additionally there have been several concerted misinformation campaigns circulating in Western media (e.g. beheaded babies, mass rape, etc.). While these lies gained instant traction, they have all been thoroughly debunked. In fact we now know that many Israeli civilians were killed by the Israeli military on October 7th, and many of the Israeli hostages killed have been killed by Israeli bombs.

Israel has additionally rounded up at least 7,490 more people to take to torture in Israeli prisons, where they will be held at the whim of the Israeli military often without even the performance of a fair trial. To date, 12 prisoners have been confirmed killed in occupation prisons since 10/7.



However, the Palestinian resistance is not anywhere close to broken and continues to fight back with more successes since October 7th. They have inspired millions to rise up across the globe. Despite its every effort and the full might of the world's most sophisticated military at its disposal, Israel has not been able to defeat the Palestinian resistance, and Palestine is not alone.

In response, the Houthi-led government in Yemen has imposed a blockade against all shipping to and from Israel, forcing some ships to reroute thousands of miles around Africa, disrupting global trade networks. In response, the U.S. has started bombing Yemen.

There have also been attacks on US bases in Iraq by insurgents and attacks on a U.S. base in Syria. Hezbollah in Lebanon maintains constant operations against Israeli military positions in the border region, occupying a major portion of the Israeli military capacity.

The Palestinian resistance was able to secure the release of 240 Palestinians (all women, children, or teenagers) from Israeli prisons via a hostage exchange that also secured a multi-day ceasefire. Israel ultimately broke the ceasefire, and since then has rearrested several of those released. One of the architects of the 10/7 Al-Aqsa Flood was someone who had himself been freed from the Israeli prisons in a prisoner exchange years before.

To date, not one Israeli hostage taken on October 7th has been freed by the Israeli military's attempts to take them back with force. The hostages taken by the Palestinian resistance fighters have been, by all accounts, treated humanely and with care, a stark contrast to the torture Palestinians are subjected to in the depths of the Israeli prison system.

Since the assault on Gaza began after 10/7, Israel has also escalated its violence, degradation, and repression against prisoners within the occupation's prisons.

Below is a summary of some of the escalations as reported by Addameer, an international organization that monitors treatment of Palestinian prisoners.

- The detention conditions are the worst within the occupation's prisons in many years; six prisoners were martyred in less than a month from October-November
- There have been 12 confirmed deaths since 10/7. The Israeli press is reporting at least 27 additional summary executions of detainees from Gaza who remain unidentified.
- Torture and beating of detainees during arrest operations, including arbitrary killings
- Widespread arrest campaigns and military encirclement around Palestinian villages in the West Bank and Occupied Jerusalem
- Deliberate medical negligence and revenge against sick prisoners.
- Hostage-taking to pressure their relatives into surrendering themselves or as retaliation
- Hundreds of arrested Gazan workers subjected to various forms of torture and abuse by the occupation army
- Open assassination of political prisoners
- Forced strip searches, sexual harassment and groping, and threats of rape, especially against women prisoners by male soldiers.
- Arrest of and abuse against children
- Arbitrary administrative detention—a policy of repression and control practiced against Palestinians.

LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL PRISONERS' MOVEMENT IN PALESTINE

To share things in their own words, below is a letter released by the national prisoners' movement in Palestine in November 2023 via Telegram at t.me/PalestineResist

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful,

An open letter from the national prisoners' movement regarding the retaliatory assault faced by prisoners in the jails of the "israeli" occupation.

To the patient masses of our Palestinian people and our brave resistance,

To our Arab and Islamic nation,
To the Qatari and Egyptian mediators,
To the International Committee of the Red Cross,
To the United Nations and the countries of the free world,

Since October 7th, the zionist enemy has begun its vengeful war against our Palestinian people in Gaza, the West Bank, and the prisons, in order to cover up the resounding defeat it faced due to the special military operation Al-Aqsa Flood, carried out by the Palestinian resistance against zionist military sites around Gaza, in support of Al-Aqsa and the prisoners, and in response to the enemy's ongoing crimes against our people.

The zionist occupation has committed heinous crimes against prisoners in prison yards, simultaneously committing acts of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity against our

people in Gaza and the West Bank, with international cover from the forces of evil and colonialism, led by the United States of America. The zionist aggression surpasses all criminals in history and the modern era with its crimes, representing the phenomenon of the new Nazis and fascists in this world.

Therefore, we wish to affirm the following:

Firstly: We extend our utmost respect and admiration to our patient and struggling Palestinian people and their brave resistance in all parts of the homeland, particularly in the proud Gaza.

Secondly: We call upon the Qatari and Egyptian mediators, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations, and the countries of the free world to pressure the occupation to stop its vengeful assault and the systematic crimes it is launching against us in prisons, as the zionist occupation has subjected us to dangerous detention conditions, transforming prisons into lethal iron graves, carrying out systematic assassinations and executions of prisoners, leading to the martyrdom of several. The zionist jailers threaten us daily with more executions. They declare to us that they have instructions to kill us if we protest against the punitive measures against us.

As we make this call to you, we do not ask you to free us from prisons: that is the task of the resistance and it will take care of it. But until God grants us freedom, we ask you to stand by your moral, humanitarian, and international responsibilities to stop the occupier's criminal acts against us and to stop this Nazi-fascist vengeful assault against us.

Thirdly: We express our pride and appreciation for the humane treatment of enemy prisoners by the Palestinian resistance in Gaza, while the occupation races against time to indulge in our blood, torment us, and commit crimes against us in prisons, and the frantic efforts by many parties within the zionist entity to pass a law for the execution of prisoners in the zionist Knesset.

The prisoners' movement in the zionist prisons Wednesday, November 29, 2023

EXCERPT FROM PRISONERS ARE THE COMPASS OF OUR STRUGGLE

The Palestinian Youth Movement, an organization in the U.S., published the piece "Prisoners are the Compass of Our Struggle": why the release of Palestinian prisoners is central to our liberation on December 6, 2023 in Shado Magazine. We want to share one section of this article below to help flesh out the role prisons and prisoners play in the movement.

"Given that both Palestinians and our liberation are criminalised both across historic Palestine and in the diaspora, it is no surprise that Palestinians consider our prisoners to be a representation of a nation in captivity. In fact, prisoner struggles in Palestine have always been a key facet of the Palestinian national liberation movement."

Within the confines of the prison, resistance takes on a whole new form when compared to resistance on the streets.

Many people imagine the prison to be the end of political power and influence – that there is no way to resist from within the confines of prison. However, even the austerity of prison can produce the most meaningful and inspiring acts of rebellion. When the weapons of resistance are scarce, prisoners remind us that the body is a front and we regularly see prisoners resisting through forms of protest such as hunger strike.

The most recent and prominent example has been the hunger strikes of Khader Adnan, a Palestinian prisoner who was martyred last year on the 87th day of hunger strike. However, there is a long history of hunger strikes that is not limited to Palestine, and includes other prisoners such as Irish freedom fighter Bobby Sands. Through these forms of protest, our prisoners show us that resistance is always possible, and that even within the suffering, isolation, and austerity of captivity, tools of resistance always exist.

At the same time, the Palestinian prisoner's movement has always been more than just a movement to continue the struggle from within the confines of Israeli prisons.

The prisoner's struggle has been an active component, a guide, for the rest of the liberation movement: it is for this reason that Palestinians often refer to prisoners as 'the compass of our struggle'. Within the confines of Israeli prison, Palestinians create schools for liberation, developing curricula and analysis, and producing novels and essays from inside prison walls."

Below is a quote from *The Trinity of Fundamentals*. This book is a fictionalized account of Palestinian prisoner Wisam Rafeedie's experiences underground and in occupation prisons. Rafeedie drafted the novel while imprisoned. Sections of the novel were transferred via pieces of bread dough and pill capsules. Here's an excerpt where Rafeedie gives texture to the experience of being held prisoner, no different in this settler hellscape than the next:

"The struggle of prisoners has a special impact on a person. It is a struggle where the simplest things for an ordinary person - air, water, food, medicine - must be paid for in blood. Men are martyred for the sake of an extra half hour of outdoor recreation; the prisoner's intestines twist in knots from the pain of hunger for extra minutes to the visits from his mother, wife, or son.

Emaciated prisoners suffer from illnesses associated with hunger strikes - weak bones, hair falling out, the loss of teeth - all in order to have hot water to bathe in, or to kiss and embrace their child during the semi-monthly visits, or to be allowed to bring in oil or soap or cigarettes, or so that they can keep their academic notebooks, or so that they can get ahold of those books in the first place, or so that they are not condemned to isolation for demanding their rights.

Things that are trivial or paltry or routine to a non-prisoner can become an aspiration and objective in prison, requiring heroism, sacrifice, or martyrdom. Imprisonment and a clandestine existence both transform the ordinary into a dearly-desired ambition."

If you want to know more, we can try to print out some recent articles and send them to you, though we can't promise we'll have the capacity to track down specific information.

The Palestinian resistance has inspired us all. May we all have such strength of will and clarity of purpose.

-the editors at KTFB

Certain Days Calendar Call for Submissions

The **Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar** collective will be releasing their 24th calendar this coming autumn. They are doing an open call for abolition-related art and article submissions to feature in the calendar, which hangs in more than 6,000 homes, workplaces, prison cells, and community spaces around the world. They encourage contributors to submit both new and existing work. **They are especially seeking submissions from people in prison or jail.**

DEADLINE FOR PRISONERS: JUNE 14TH, 2024

FORMAT GUIDELINES

Articles

Due to space limitations, submissions may be lightly edited for clarity and concision, with no change to the original intent.

- 400-500 words max. If you submit a longer piece, they will have to edit for length.
- Poetry is also welcome but needs to be significantly shorter than 400 words to accommodate layout.
- Please include a suggested title.

Art

- The calendar is 11" tall by 8.5" wide, so art with a 'portrait' orientation is preferred. Art need not fit those dimensions exactly.
- They are interested in a diversity of media.
- The calendar is printed in color and they prefer color images.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Those on the outside can send a low-res file as a submission, but if the piece is chosen, they will need a high-res version of it for print (600 dpi). info@certaindays.org
- You may send as many submissions as you like. Chosen artists and authors will receive a free copy of the calendar and promotional postcards. Because the calendar is a fundraiser, we cannot offer money to contributors.

**PRISONER SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE JUNE 14 AND
CAN BE MAILED TO:**

Certain Days
c/o Burning Books
420 Connecticut Street
Buffalo, NY 14213

ABOUT THE CALENDAR

The Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar is a joint fundraising and educational project between outside organizers across North America and current and former political prisoners, including currently imprisoned Xinachtli (s/n Alvaro Luna Hernandez) in Texas. We were happy to welcome founding members Herman Bell and Robert Seth Hayes (Rest in Power) home from prison in 2018, and David Gilbert in 2021, each of whom spent over forty years behind bars. All of the current members of the outside collective are grounded in day-to-day organizing work other than the calendar, on issues ranging from legal aid to community media, radical education to prisoner solidarity. We work from an anti-imperialist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, feminist, queer- and trans-liberationist position. All proceeds from the calendar go to abolitionist organizations working for a better world.

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS:

Correction: For the piece on the so-called San Quentin Rehabilitation Center that ran in our previous issue, we incorrectly used the author's name as the title. The author is Grim, of United Struggle from Within, which is what the piece was incorrectly titled. Our deepest apologies!

We hope you enjoyed this unique full color issue of KTFB.

Please help us spread the word about our newsletter! We're always hoping to add more people to our mailing list. If you know anyone who might be interested, please let them know to reach out, or share their address if they're cool with it.

We're always accepting submissions of analysis, art, storytelling, poetry, rants, grievances, musings, lamentations, and anything else you'd like to see in this newsletter. Send them all.

We're also looking for help getting the word out that **we now have a Spanish translation of our newsletter!** People can sign up to receive the Spanish version each month, or request the translated version of this or previous newsletters:

¡Tenemos una versión en español de este boletín informativo! Por favor escribanos si quiere una copia de esta edición o una edición previa, o si quiere ser agregado a nuestra lista de correo.

Oakland Abolition & Solidarity
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