

BULLDOZER

THE ONLY VEHICLE FOR PRISON ABOLITION

ISSUE 3

IWOC



JAN. 24



If you are a prisoner or a relative of a prisoner in the Irish prison system, north or south, and would like to highlight an issue of concern, rights or prisoner struggle then please get in touch with IWOC below.

For all correspondence, write or email IWOC at:

I.W.O.C
P.O. BOX 346,
DERRY, BT48 4FZ,
IRELAND

iwoc.ireland@iww.org.uk

Disclaimer: The views, information, or opinions expressed within these pages are solely those of the individuals involved and do not necessarily represent those of Incarcerated Workers Organising Committee.

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WELCOME TO BULLDOZER!

Welcome to Bulldozer #3! – a zine for prison abolition! Bulldozer is produced by the Incarcerated Worker's Organising Committee (IWOC) Ireland, a sub-committee of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) Ireland.

IWOC members both behind bars and those on the outside are committed to organising to improve the conditions of prisoners today and a world without prisons tomorrow.

IWOC is fighting for effective solidarity among the prisoner class, so they can collectively bargain for meaningful changes in their environment. Our first article is dedicated to offering advice about 'How to start a prison union.' It outlines how people in prisons can join the IWW and work towards being recognised as a prison branch.

As this zine goes to be printed, Gaza remains under bombardment. Thousands have died, hundreds more die every day.

The horrors inflicted on the people of Gaza are the direct result of a racist, apartheid political regime, which is enabled by British-American imperialism and the global military-industrial-complex it facilitates.

Grassroots, international solidarity has been emboldened by Israel's campaign of state terror.

Palestine Action is one example of this, a group of activists whose campaign of direct action is working to shut down Israel's international weapons trade.

In this zine we have an interview with Palestine Action that explores the group's aims, experiences and successes in using direct action.

Bulldozer offers a creative outlet for people in prison and those previously imprisoned. This issue is no different, we are happy to present book reviews, poetry and visual art produced by those who have experience of life in prison.



These creative endeavours offer an insight into life in prison from a radical perspective and provide inspiration to people on the inside and fellow workers on the outside to creatively challenge the logic of having prisons.

IWOC Ireland would like to thank everyone who took the time to contribute to the creation of this zine.

We hope those who read the pages that follow are animated to engage in mutual aid and take direct acts that consciously work to abolish prisons.

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL!

To get involved, or contribute to Bulldozer write to:

Bulldozer
P.O. Box 346
Derry City, BT48 4FZ, Ireland

email: iwoc.ireland@iww.org.uk

website:
www.onebigunion.ie/iwocireland

twitter [@IwocIreland](https://twitter.com/IwocIreland)

How To Form A Prison Union



Becoming a member

To join the union visit:
iww.org.uk/join

To get involved with IWOC or sign up an incarcerated worker contact:
iwoc@iww.org.uk

Forming an IWOC group

Incarcerated members can either form inside groups/cells or branches for the purpose of organising and receiving support from the IWW.

Organising an inside IWOC group is an informal process and should be based around a small social group (5-10 people) who are organising together.

Such groups have fewer requirements, are less likely to be broken up, and are a common first step in building a prison union branch.

Inside IWOC groups should select a communication, or 'comms', delegate from among their membership and identify this member to a trusted outside liaison (for example a friend or family member on the outside).

The inside IWOC group should work with their outside liaison to determine how their delegate will participate in external work.¹

This communication link is likely to be achieved by the outside liaison being added to a call list as letters can take too long and can be more easily blocked. Measures, primarily making sure the outside liaison is aware of any other imprisoned members who are contactable or even having multiple delegates, should be taken early on to ensure that if this method of communication with the cell/branch is disrupted another delegate is able to pick up this role.

The comms delegate is the most dangerous role for incarcerated individuals as it has the most risk of detection by authorities and can lead to the person being targeted by the screws. This should be made clear from the start.

An IWOC group should have a clear understanding about who is a member, who can join, how decisions are made, and establish communication with union members outside the prison.

IWOC groups are an essential tool for building solidarity and challenging the power structures within prisons. Isolation is a common tool used by the screws to break the spirit of prisoners. This is both a physical and psychological tactic. Like in the workplace, we are safer and more powerful when acting collectively to try and get changes within prison. Even basic demands like better sanitation, food, breaks, books, pay can be daunting under the repressive and demoralising circumstances of incarceration.

However, by sharing the workload as a group and making decisions/taking action together can make demands harder to ignore and actions (strikes, sit-ins, occupations, sabotage, etc) more effective.

An IWOC group should have each other's back. Extortion of prisoners (by other prisoners) to get money for drugs; violence by fascists, racists, jihadists, homophobes, transphobes; and harassment by screws are all serious issues that members of IWOC can and have faced. The IWW believes that an injury to one is an injury to all and on the inside this solidarity can save lives.

Inside IWOC groups shall strive toward becoming a chartered IWW Industrial Union Branch (IU 613).

Forming an IWOC branch

A branch is formal structure, requires members to apply for a charter from the IWW and should

establish a mechanism for proposing and voting on motions accessible to all members. Such mechanisms can include holding branch meetings that all members are invited to attend, or each member being informed of motions via 1-1's by delegates or via external liaisons and returning their vote to the secretary.

The aim of an inside branch is to create a sustainable democratic structure for prisoners to make decisions about life inside the prison and make demands to the prison authorities through their union. Even though it is legal for prisoners to join a union it may take a strike or sustained campaign to win agreement by the prison administration to allow meetings to take place openly. Be prepared for that fight!

An inside IWOC branch, like a group, should have a clear understanding about who is a member, who can join, and how decisions are made. The IWOC branch should be in regular communication with the outside IWOC mem-

bers via their comms delegate to ensure outside support for inside activities and the coordination of external actions.

To formally create an IWW branch in your prison, or cell block, you need to:

- Write a branch application (this does not need to be a formal document, just make clear in a letter that this is the application) signed by a minimum of 10 committed IWW members and include prison ID numbers so we can send mail to everyone;
- This letter should include:
 - The branch's agreed bylaws (this does not need to be extensive but it is useful to have rules about things like what is enough people to vote on a motion, how frequent meetings should be, etc);
 - A short letter describing why you want to be a branch;
 - A copy of notes from the founding meeting, which describe the

democratic election of branch officers (who must be IWW members). Officers required include:

- At least one Comms Delegate to sign up new members via a liaison and update external organising;
- A Secretary to maintain membership info and facilitate meetings for internal IWOC members;
- The contact information for your outside liaison to help your branch communicate with the steering committee (let your branch know if one of your members have a friend or family member on the outside who can serve in this capacity).
- Send a copy of your branch application, branch bylaws, and notes from your founding meeting as a letter to a trusted external liaison or to IWOC, 14 Robertson Road, Bristol, England BS5 6JY

Be ready to build a force for change within the prison system, run democratically by people in prison themselves.

IMPORTANT NOTE

The 5 to 10 founding members of Groups and Branches inside prisons should not have charges or infractions related to sexual violence.

We know that many are unjustly accused, and we do embrace restorative processes, however the founding members of Locals and Branches should all be people who do not have these sorts of charges.

This approach will be more successful behind bars, and it also supports IWW culture and policies which strongly denounce sexual violence.

1 Examples of such external work could include organising demonstrations in solidarity with prisoners demands, providing education on conditions inside prison, contacting authorities on prisoner's behalf, fundraising or getting resources into the prison, publishing statements or liaising with media on behalf of the inside group.

Institutional Racism & Solitary Confinement



On The Streets: Solidarity with Kevan

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a symbol of courage and defiance to an institutional racist prison and so-called criminal justice system in the U.S. His continued imprisonment proves that the US prison system remains a weapon of state repression, against Black people particularly.

Here in Britain, we have an equally racist prison and criminal justice system, exemplified by the treatment of prisoners like Kevan Thakar. Kevan is a mixed-race Muslim prisoner who was convicted and imprisoned under the joint enterprise law. A law that specifically targets Black and minority

ethnic young people. Throughout his imprisonment Kevan has suffered brutality at the hands of prison guards and the prison system. But has always resiliently fought back and refuses to be broken.

In 2010, Kevan defended himself from a racist attack by a gang of guards at Franklin high security prison and was charged with seriously assaulting the guards. At his trial the jury acquitted him and concluded he had acted in self-defence, but Kevan has since been buried in solitary confinement for more than 10 years.

In 2021, the special rapporteur on torture complained that the treatment of Kevan amounted to torture. Yet still Kevan remains buried in solitary confinement.

Mumia and Kevan are experiencing the worst racist violence from the state and therefore deserve our absolute and total support.

Kevan is being systematically tortured along with many of prisoners in the British prison system. And these prisoners are being held in solitary confinement and mentally tortured to break them. Not because they are a risk to anybody. Not because they are a danger to the public. But because they are activists, human rights activists in prison. And they are tortured systematically.

The unique thing about Kevan is he has retained the strength and the political commitment to fight back. And the system will not break Kevan, whatever happens. The Courts have a duty to uphold Kevan's judicial review. However, what will really help Kevan's situation, and the situation with many other prisoners being held in solitary confinement, is the degree of sup-

port that we can mobilise out here on their behalf.

That's what needs to happen because the British prison system is going to continue to keep Kevan in some form of isolation/segregation.

We have got to say to the prison system 'we are not going to allow you to continue to torture or murder Kevan.'

We are with Kevan. He is not on his own. We will fight all the way with him.

To write to Kevan:

**Kevan Thakrar
A4907AE
HMP Manchester
1 Southall St, Cheetham Hill
Manchester, M60 9AH**

Please remember to include a stamped envelope with letters if you can!

By John Bowden

My Pestiferous Life

(Compass Editions, 2020) by Claudio Lavazza

I read this book when I was in HMP Bristol. I had to put in a lot of COMP1 compliant forms to receive books in all the prisons I was in but by a stroke of luck, madness or genius this one arrived without any problems.

Originally written in Spanish by Italian anarchist prisoner Claudio Lavazza, the autobiography covers several decades of political struggle in Europe, and was recently translated into English.

Claudio is a conscientious bank robber and gentleman, who was funding social struggles. Currently he is imprisoned in France, where he was sentenced for the at-one-time largest armed theft in French history, equivalent to 26

million Euros today. Claudio is now seeking parole in France after doing his time. Claudio was caught when a bank robbery went wrong in Cordoba, Spain, in 1996. He's been imprisoned since then. Claudio has spent many years in the notorious FIES isolation units of Spain and so the book contains his accounts of never giving hope or his determination in the face of oppression.

The book features Claudio's accounts of his politicisation and his thoughts about life and the system. The book features other prisoner's letters, printed chronologies of direct actions and social revolts in Europe to show what was happening at the time, and how it is all connected.



That way the reader can see that Claudio is part of a movement of anti-capitalist resistance taking place.

The book is written in straight-forward language and it is a great book to share with other people in prison. Whilst I was inside, other prisoners read a lot of true crime genre; books about armed robbers, gangsters etc.

So to read about the life of Claudio was interesting to most of the guys I came into contact with.

My Pestiferous Life was a true gift to read and it gives some strength and spirit since it is an inspiring life that Claudio has lead, and continues to lead- he doesn't back down

from his actions and ideas.

Freedom for Claudio!

The book is available from Compass Editions
(compasseditions.noblogs.org)

To write to Claudio:

*Claudio Lavazza
N. d'ecrou 11818
MA 1, 1er droite cellule 131
CP de Mont-de-Marsan
Chemin de Pemegnan
BP 90629
40000 Mont-de-Marsan
France*

**Reviewed by
Anonymous Anarchist**

Abolition Revolution

(Pluto Press, 2022)

**by Aviah Sarah Day
& Shanice Octavia McBean**

Before the police murder of George Floyd in 2020 and the massive growth of Black Lives Matter internationally, the politics of prison abolition had been totally marginalised and cast into a utopian wilderness. *Abolition Revolution* is an important contribution to re-establishing the discussion of abolition.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s prisoner support groups like Radical Alternatives to Prison (RAP) and Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners (PROP) represented a growing political awareness of the revolutionary significance of the struggle against prisons and an understanding of how prisons are essentially weapons of the capitalist state to keep the dis-

obedient poor contained, and therefore must be abolished as part of a wider revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

During the 1980s the backlash of Thatcherite authoritarianism re-established the impregnability of prisons and even among the so-called radical left the dialogue regarding issues like prisoners' rights became centred on acceptance of the inevitability of prisons in whatever form.

The murder of George Floyd re-awakened an awareness of the true purpose of the police and other instruments of state repression like prisons, and how their abolition must be a vital part of the

revolutionary struggle for socialism.

Abolition Revolution was published in 2022 and gives a powerful analysis of the true purpose of prisons and why the struggle against them must merge into a broader struggle against the capitalist system. The authors, Aviah Sarah Day and Shanice Octavia McBean, are members of Sisters Uncut - a group which began as a radical feminist campaign against cuts to domestic violence services and which gradually became abolitionist, as the impossibilities of reformism became apparent.

As well as describing the long history of colonial legacy embodied in modern police and prison systems, Abolition Revolution identifies the struggle to destroy prisons as an important part of the wider class struggle to overthrow and destroy capitalism. 'Abolition is class struggle' heads a chapter in the book and throughout the book their position that 'Abolition cannot be anything other than a revolutionary, anti-capitalist struggle' is expressed in a revolutionary communist way. Whilst the authors do not explicitly cite Marx, Engels or

Lenin, other than via secondary sources, all of the underpinning of the book's narrative, and the way it describes racism and imperialism, the use of a reserve army of labour, the role of women in the reproduction of labour for capitalism, and the way that police and prisons operate to protect capital, will be familiar to anyone who has ever looked at Engels on the family, private property and the state, or Lenin on State and Revolution.

Drawing on their own experiences in Sisters Uncut and the recent Kill the Bill demos and setting up of Copwatch groups, the authors also look back at some examples of where people in detention took direct action against the system oppressing them. Section 11 of the book therefore recounts the experiences of the men incarcerated in Strangeways in 1990 who took to the roof of the prison in a 25-day long protest against the brutality and neglect of the system, and the women in the Yarl's Wood immigration prison in 2018, who staged a determined and high profile hunger strike to draw attention to their punitive de-

Strangeways Prison Revolt
Manchester



tention and treatment.

The section on the Strangeways uprising draws on Larkin Publications book *Strangeways 1990: a serious disturbance*, as well as protester Alan Lord's autobiographical *Life in Strangeways: from riot to redemption*.

Day and McBean write that 'The rebels at Strangeways and Yarl's Wood may not have had explicitly abolitionist goals but they risked everything to take militant action in the hope of a dignified life'. They contrast this to activists who limit themselves to 'academic theory, purity politics or ally-ship models'.

Looking back at Strangeways they pose the question of unity in terms of the politics of the day: 'We wonder what the revolutionary potential might have been, had the hundreds of thousands of poll tax rebels made their way to the prisons to combine the rage on the streets with that in the cells.'

Abolition Revolution centres the struggle against prisons firmly in the context of the struggle against the capitalist system itself: 'Abolition must also be underpinned by an anti-capitalist, class analysis and practice. One that seeks to leverage class power in order to abolish the underlying conditions

that give rise to a society that requires the control of the masses – the working and underclass – by the few in the ruling elite. This is the revolution in the abolition.’

The book emphasises how the abolition of prisons can only take place within the abolition of a social and economic system that marginalises and criminalises the most disadvantaged and oppressed: ‘A revolutionary and abolitionist vision cannot limit itself to dismantling. This is not the end goal of our liberation.’

Abolition must work towards the wider goal of seizing the land, natural resources and wealth stolen from us by capitalists; abolition must work in the service of proletarian revolution. The brutal police murders of Sarah Everard and George Floyd refuelled an atmosphere of discussion about abolition of the police, prisons and ‘criminal justice system’. Abolition Revolution is an excellent contribution to revitalising the possibility of building an anti-capitalist movement for abolition.

By John Bowden



Emotion soup / Identity

a whirlwind it's been

stuck in this cage

alone with my thoughts

containing my rage

trying to numb it all out

by just looking ahead

leaves my energy drained

I've got a blue matt for a bed

A statistic

A number

A prisoner

Corruption

In my ideal world

I banish these walls

I break these locks

I forget these fools

But the truth is this is staying with
me

For the rest of my life,

I never got the chance to appeal

Paralysed by strife

To be made an example

To kidnap me from my bubble

I put my hands up

I haven't made it without struggle

So when the day comes

To leave alpha wing behind

To not hear "locking in"

It'll feel so sublime

To lick my lips

As I soak in the sun

Bask in the glory

Of when thy freedom shall come

Until then

I stay blinking

Thinking

As acid sparkles corrupt my vision

Sitting here on a rotten bench I
remain imprisoned

Hedonistic lifestyle

I've given in to my laziness,

Aimlessly thinking of ways out of
this mess

I still feel a little sadness its true

I wanna lock myself away

And just try to get through

Another day in this shithole

Run by power-hungry parasites

It takes all my calm and collective-
ness

To muzzle my bite

So you can lock my door

You can ignore my pleads

You won't catch me on the floor

Screaming mercy on my knees

You can burn me at the stake

hide me from the sun

rain on my parade,

deprive me from fun.

I don't care

I don't care

I don't care

By Charli Mae



Part One of Interview with **Palestine Action**

Can you tell me about the aims of Palestine Action?

Palestine Action has one primary aim and that is to shut Elbit Systems down. Elbit Systems is Israel's largest weapons company, set up in 1966 specifically to arm the expansion of occupied territory, and almost 60 years later they provide over 85% of the occupation forces' drones, in addition to munitions and surveillance systems.

Elbit market their weapons as being "battle-tested" on the captive Palestinian population and work directly with the Israeli occupation military in the use of these weapons, especially in the experimental weapons systems they wish to test.

This includes testing AI drone fleets, which were used to bomb Gaza in the May 2021 attacks. Elbit then sell these weapons and technologies to regimes around the

to use against both civilians and revolutionaries. The experience Elbit have developing surveillance technologies and maintaining the colonial Apartheid Wall landed them the contract to build Trump's US-Mexico border wall as well as UK border enforcement contracts and phone-tapping software contracts with the police.

Elbit export their techniques of oppression around the world to the highest bidder, and use ally countries to host production sites in the belief that they'll be less vulnerable to attack from resistance. This is where Palestine Action steps in.

Palestine Action refuses to allow Britain to protect these war profiteers and engineers of death by hiding them within our own communities. We also target Rafael (another Israeli arms manufacturer) and Teledyne (an American arms manufacturer which has the most export licenses to Israel from Britain) as well as any individuals or businesses who work with these companies.

When Palestine Action was founded in 2020, Elbit had 10 sites in

Britain; we have since forced them to permanently close and sell their factory in Oldham and lose their HQ in London - 2 down, 8 to go. We are answering Palestine's call to globalise the Intifada and showing the British government that their crimes abroad will never stay out of sight and mind of their citizens, we will resist until liberation is achieved, and it will be achieved!

What actions have been taken by Palestine Action activists in solidarity with the people of Palestine?

Palestine Action has employed a wide array of tactics and actions to shut Elbit down and disrupt Israeli weapons manufacturing in Britain, from lock-ons (activists locking themselves to a place to make it difficult to remove them) and mass protests outside of Elbit factories and offices, to rooftop occupations and - taking inspiration from the Raytheon 9 and other activists - entering the factories and destroying what we find inside, or the factory itself, so that it can't be used to kill or produce more weaponry.

These different resistance strate-

gies differ in their level of criminalisation, and we undertake both accountable and covert actions.

Facing prosecution (though never necessarily the aim) gives activist the opportunity to make our case and expose the criminality of Elbit as well as the the governments and businesses who collaborate with them in the courts.

Regardless of the potential consequences or level of intensity, our actions always aim to bring Elbit's work to a stop for as long as possible - we don't just want to draw attention to Elbit and these other corps, we want to directly disrupt production and halt Israel's military supply chain. We believe this is the most direct way to support the Palestinian struggle from within our home country. Britain's historical and current

role in the occupation gives us both the responsibility and the opportunity to fight for Palestine here and now.

Have activists been imprisoned for their direct actions? What have their experiences been like?

Over 20 actionists have been imprisoned so far even though only six received custodial sentences, most have been held on remand. Remand periods have been as short as a few days or as long as seven months. We currently only have one former actionist still imprisoned and awaiting release. I'm sure there's been a lot of variety in people's experiences so it has to generalise, but several actionists who've left prison have recounted how they received lots of love and solidarity from other prisoners after sharing the reason why they were sent down and what they were fighting for.

Actionists also highlighted lots of elements of the prison system as being detrimental to prisoner health, or an expression of capitalist conditions intensifying within prison contexts. We have also seen how systematic biases and bigotry are unleashed on individual prisoners. Arab and Muslim prisoners are often denied any books with Arabic script.

Part Two of this indepth interview with Palestine Action continues within the next issue of Bulldozer.

Community!

Community is an area we are all in.

Not just a label given by Councils or government within.

It's about coming together, barriers no one can break.

Building common foundations. Identities no one can take.

Bonds are created through unity, resilience formed so strong, ensuring we combine to identify where we belong.

Accepting diversity allows a common ground.

Age, gender, religion, no one will beat us down.

Becoming one allowing care and consideration, in facing trials and tribulations, bringing everyone elation.

Life experiences share, give guidance and direction.

Not able to be bought or sold, only open to perception.

Our community is our belief a future we all want.

Working with a purpose to bring us together.

That's our community no one can beat.

Ryan



Without Prejudice

Do not condemn me for all that I do.
Fundamentally, I am the same as you.
Do not intrude upon my thoughts.

Or in the trap of prejudice you will be caught.
In every life mistakes occur.

In that I'm just like him or her.

I'm paying the price for what I have done.
Once I'm out it be gone.

Don't hound me forever for one misdeed.
Allow me truly to be free.

Burn me not with the prison brand.
Let me go and simply shake my hand.

I am not just the things I have done.
Like you I am a mother's son.

All I want is a chance to be free.
You have no idea how much that means to me.

Ryan