

Report from the No Borders network gathering in Manchester

16-17 February 08

Up to 60 No Borders activists came together in Manchester to discuss the future of the network. The gathering was called by Manchester No Borders, and groups from Brighton, Bristol, Newcastle, Oxford, Liverpool, London, Cardiff, Birmingham and more came for a weekend of discussions, and planning.

The weekend kicked off with a discussion on the identity of No Borders. What is No Borders, can we agree on a cohesive identity for the network? The discussion trickled along slowly until someone mentioned 'anticapitalist?' and at last this seemed to be a position that everyone agreed on. But what does this mean? How does capitalism relate to borders? This debate kept going for most of the first morning and in various conversations throughout the weekend, there was definitely a sense that this needed to be pursued and that it was at the top of the agenda (literally-pushing the pre-planned agenda into oblivion!) for many activists in the No Borders network.

After a morning of theoretical discussions we broke for lunch and came back refreshed to discuss tactics. In small groups people discussed the potential conflict between small scale achievable (?) actions against migration management and solidarity campaigns and the networks broader goals. Is there a conflict? What should we focus our energies on as a network? This discussion fed in nicely to the next point on the agenda- who/what should be our target? A few key targets were

pulled out of this discussion: snatch squads/dawn raids, detentions centres, housing, airlines involved in deportations, G4S, reporting centres.

Despite the late night (for some) Sunday morning saw nearly all of the faces from the day before having a relaxed breakfast and a cuppa before the discussions started again.

I think it would be fair to say that without really planning to do so it quickly emerged that there was allot of energy to decide on a national, network wide, campaign. So the targets chosen from the day before were discussed and after a lengthy discussion and a number of 'testing the water' spectrums it was decided that yes we would try to reach a decision on a campaign, or two.



Groups presented the pros and cons of their respective campaigns, the urgency, locality, accessibility and feasibility (in terms of action opportunities) were discussed and the final decision, with only one stand aside, was that two working groups would begin planning two national campaigns, one targeting snatch squads and the other targeting airlines involved in deportations. The snatch squad campaign will target local security forces involved in the arrest of asylum seekers/refugees/migrants from their homes in the early hours of the morning. The campaign targeting airlines, following on from the success of XL airline which recently halted their involvement in deportations after a similar campaign, will target high profile airlines such as Virgin.

For more information about the No Borders network in the UK visit:

www.noborders.org.uk

Or sign up to:

<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/nbuk>

GEO protest, Reading

22 February 08

GEO, the company which runs Campsfield immigration removal centre near Oxford, was visited by activists from Bristol, Oxford, Reading, London and elsewhere. They arrived to find private security and PCSOs guarding the offices (obviously monitoring our lists). We discovered, unlike last time, that the employees had not been given the day off. So we split into groups and surrounded their small, ground floor offices and made a racket with drums, whistles etc. At first the employees responded by attempting to move to different sides of the office, however, the

noise was so loud that this clearly proved hopeless. Particularly effective was holding the megaphone up to the windows - right next to their desks - and entertaining them with the feedback from the instrument. Police arrived and didn't do anything.

Leaflets were posted through the door explaining our opposition to GEO's attempts to profit on the misery of asylum seekers and how the employees should seek alternative careers. These were later spotted on their desks.

No Borders South Wales picket Home Office in Cardiff

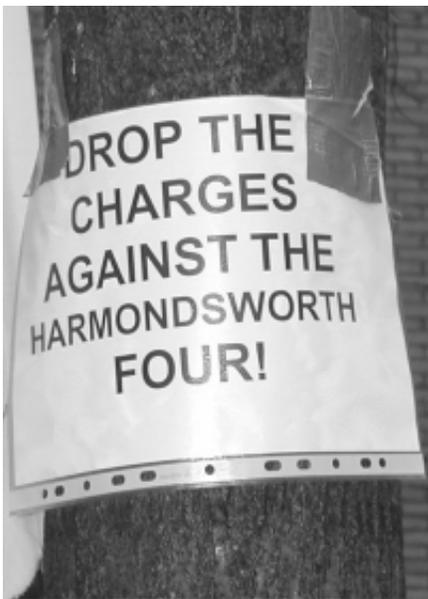
12 February 08

The local office of the Border and Immigration Agency in Cardiff at 31-33 Newport Road was picketed by activists on 12 February.

200 leaflets that highlighted the agency's role in a barbaric and racist UK immigration regime were distributed to passers by and to individuals who are required to attend the offices in order to sign in while their applications for asylum are processed. Immigration 'snatch' squads are also operating from this building.

Kindly, the offices' Chief of Staff came out for a chat. After telling the protesters proudly that he used to be involved in immigration raids and then taking their banner down, he attempted to justify his job and argue that the UK immigration system was fair.

Try telling that to terminally ill Ama Sumani who was removed from her hospital bed in Cardiff to be returned to Ghana last month, despite her doctors telling the Home Office that they would be sending her to her death.



Harmondsworth 4 acquitted !

22 February 2008

The four migrants accused of "conspiracy to commit violent disorder" during the Harmondsworth uprising in 2006 were today found not guilty. Relying on a clearly insufficiently indoctrinated jury, the attempt to single out and punish few individuals with violent criminal convictions and long sentences has been thwarted. Of course, all four have already served one year and three months in prison, on top of varying times in immigration detention. Now they will have to resume their struggle against the immigration system, which imprisoned them for seeking refuge in the first place, and will most probably be dispersed around Britain's detention estate until their cases are 'resolved'.

In November 2006 detainees at Harmondsworth immigration detention centre protested against conditions inside the centre and their treatment by the guards. The centre was damaged and the detainees were moved to other detention centres and prisons.

The 'Support the Harmondsworth Four Campaign', including No Borders activists, have held protests outside the court every Monday throughout the trial.

No Borders activist found guilty

28 January 2008

D. Thompson, who lives in Bradford, was found guilty at Crawley magistrates court of aggravated trespass at the HQ of XL Airways at Gatwick Airport. On 17th August 2007 he was part of a group who entered the offices to protest against a deportation flight to the Democratic Republic of Congo scheduled for 31st August 2007. Using a bicycle D-lock to lock himself in reception, he demanded to speak with management and discussed the human impact of their contract with the home office to deport children and adults.

The protest on 17th August, which involved another dozen of campaigners from across the country and coincided with the Camp for Climate Action near Heathrow, was to highlight XL's role in the forceful deportation of 38 rejected asylum seekers, including children, to DR Congo in February 2007, and to prevent another charter flight that was scheduled for August 30th. The campaigners gave out leaflets at XL's offices to make their employees, especially the pilots, aware that they were "flying people to death".

Following the protest, XL withdrew from a £1.5 million contract to carry out deportation flights on behalf of the Home Office. The airline expressed their "sympathy for all dispossessed persons in the world" and claimed they "did not understand the political dimensions involved" in such charter flights.

Finding Mr Thompson guilty, District Judge Ede sentenced him to a 12 month conditional discharge and awarded costs of £300 to the prosecution. In his summing up DJ Ede admitted that the actions were taken on a point of principle which he respected, but were 'a step too far'.

Mr Thompson responded: 'It is dawn raids, breaking down the doors of families and deporting them to countries where they face imprisonment, torture and death, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, that is a step too far'. 'I feel my actions went just far enough. I believe that everyone should take whatever action is within their abilities in the face of social and environmental injustices like deporting so-called 'failed' asylum seekers to a country destabilised by wars over resources. I would happily do what I did again – although I might wait for my conditional discharge to expire'.

Mr Thompson intends to try and match the £300 prosecution costs by raising at least £300 for Congo Support Project, a user-led group that supports and advocates for Congolese refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. Please support him. Donations can be made via autonomous-congo@riseup.net

Bristol No Borders prevent dawn raids, again

12 February 2008

As part of the ongoing campaign against dawn raids, protesters from Bristol No Borders have returned to blockade Portishead Border & Immigration Agency (BIA) depot to prevent them from being able to leave in vehicles and snatch families. The activists chained themselves to a car blocking the car park exit. They arrived at 3 am.

Mike Daly of Bristol No Borders said : "In December we came here and prevented the dawn raid squads from abducting families from their homes in the week before Christmas. Now we are back again. There will be no raids today. This inhumane practice needs to stop."

Government policy targets the most visible and the most vulnerable amongst those migrants that it sees as being 'undesirable'. Families with young children fit the bill perfectly.

Jo Freeman of Bristol No Borders explained, "...Children, the ill or traumatised are targeted, in order to boost their official figures. Doors are kicked in and families are snatched from their beds and taken to detention centres, where they are punished for seeking refuge in this country, and taken away from their houses, jobs, schools and communities – their lives."