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Updates for April 15th

1 Apr - Trump's DOJ Seeks Death Penalty Against Luigi Mangione

Attorney General Pam Bondi called the murder of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson "an act of political violence."

MORE:

by Elizabeth Weill-Greenberg (*The Appeal*)

Attorney General Pamela Bondi has directed federal prosecutors to seek the death penalty for Luigi Mangione, who is accused of killing health insurance executive Brian Thompson.

The U.S. Department of Justice said the "murder was an act of political violence."

On Dec. 4, a gunman shot and killed Thompson as he was on his way to an investors meeting in Manhattan. At the time of his death, his annual compensation package was worth over \$10 million. On Dec. 9, Mangione was arrested in Pennsylvania. Then-Attorney General Merrick Garland charged Mangione with numerous offenses, including one capital crime, using a firearm to commit murder. A capital charge means that a prosecutor has the discretion to seek a death sentence.

Under DOJ practices at the time, prosecutors rarely sought the death penalty, and no executions were carried out during Biden's term. On her first day in office, Bondi rescinded limits on capital punishment and encouraged federal prosecutors to seek the death penalty whenever possible, except in cases with "significant mitigating circumstances."

Mangione has been detained at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn. Detainees, advocates, and civil rights lawyers have long condemned the conditions at the jail. In August, a judge refused to send an elderly man to the jail to serve his sentence because of the facility's "dangerous, barbaric conditions." A report from the DOJ Inspector General found that jail officials had mismanaged a power outage in the winter of 2019, which left detainees with little or no heat for a week during one of the coldest times of the year.

In the wake of Thompson's death, Americans have rallied around Mangione and condemned the health insurance industry, which routinely denies medical procedures and medications, jeopardizing people's lives and plunging their customers into crushing debt.

In addition to federal charges, Mangione also faces seven state-level charges filed by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg. If convicted in state court, he faces life in prison without the possibility of parole. In 2004, the New York Court of Appeals declared the state's death penalty statute unconstitutional.

In a December statement, Mangione's lead attorney Karen Friedman Agnifilo criticized the duplicate charges, saying they may violate constitutional protections.

"The federal government's reported decision to pile on top of an already overcharged first-degree murder and state terror case is highly unusual and raises serious constitutional and statutory double jeopardy concerns. We are ready to fight these charges in whatever court they are brought," Agnifilo said.

Agnifilo condemned the DOJ's announcement in a statement released Tuesday afternoon.

“By seeking to murder Luigi Mangione, the Justice Department has moved from the dysfunctional to the barbaric. Their decision to execute Luigi is political and goes against the recommendation of the local federal prosecutors, the law, and historical precedent,” Agnifilo said. “While claiming to protect against murder, the federal government moves to commit the pre-meditated, state-sponsored murder of Luigi. By doing this, they are defending the broken, immoral, and murderous healthcare industry that continues to terrorize the American people.”

3 Apr - With Arrest of Midwife, Texas Escalates Chilling Crackdown

The near-total abortion ban in Texas has already been deadly. A criminalizing crackdown will make mortality rates worse.

MORE:

by Schuyler Mitchell (*Truthout*)

For several months, state investigators in Texas staked out clinics, interviewed witnesses and dove through dumpsters to look for evidence. Why, you may ask, did the government pour time and money into an extensive surveillance operation based on an anonymous tip? To arrest a midwife for providing reproductive health care.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton announced the arrest of Maria Margarita Rojas on March 17. The Houston-area midwife faces up to 20 years in prison for allegedly performing illegal abortions — a second-degree felony — and practicing medicine without a license. The chilling announcement marks Texas’s first criminal case against a health care provider since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned in 2022. Two of Rojas’s employees, Jose Ley and Rubildo Matos, were also arrested.

Before her arrest, Rojas ran Clínicas Latinoamericanas, a group of low-cost health clinics primarily serving northwest Houston’s Spanish-speaking community. Three facilities were effectively shut down on March 20, when a judge granted a temporary restraining order filed by Paxton’s office. Patients seeking affordable, necessary health care such as ultrasounds, vaccinations and medical exams for immigration procedures will now have to look elsewhere for services.

“It is no accident that Paxton would target a minority community already demonized in the right’s anti-immigrant discourse,” Natasha Lennard noted in *The Intercept*. Texas’s abortion ban is one of the most restrictive in the country, with no exceptions for rape or incest, but the draconian policy is wildly unpopular: In a 2022 survey conducted by the University of Texas at Austin, 78 percent of Texas voters said that abortion should be legal in some form. Notably, that was the public sentiment even before the Supreme Court overturned *Roe* and the wide-reaching harms of Texas’s abortion ban could be fully felt.

Now, with Donald Trump in office, it seems the far-right is looking to send a chilling message. What better expression of Christo-nationalist state power than to escalate the crackdown on abortion seekers?

Writing in her newsletter *Abortion, Every Day*, Jessica Valenti called Paxton “a political operator who picks cases strategically” and noted that he “likely chose Rojas because he believes Americans won’t find her sympathetic — whether due to racism, classism, or the stories his office plans to spin.” Indeed, Paxton’s office has already begun attempting to villainize Rojas and her associates; as Valenti notes, it’s important to remember that we should meet each of the state’s claims with extreme skepticism.

Paxton’s office, for instance, chose to highlight in a press release that Ley entered the United States from Cuba without documents in 2022. The release does not clarify that Ley later received a green card, but it does falsely claim that it was the Biden administration’s nonexistent “open borders policies” that later led to Ley’s parole. The state’s emphasis on Rojas allegedly operating “without a license” also obscures the fact that she has been a licensed midwife since 2018. A fellow midwife told the *New York Times* that Rojas had been an obstetrician in Peru before she came to the United States.

Perhaps knowing that Texas's war on abortion is so unpopular, Paxton's office also made a point to clarify in a press release that "Texas law holds abortion providers — not patients — criminally responsible for unlawful procedures." But it is, of course, the patients who will suffer some of the greatest harms from the state's incursion on bodily autonomy.

Take the case of Kate Cox, for instance: a 31-year-old mother of two who sued to access emergency abortion care in Texas after receiving a lethal fetal diagnosis from her doctor. Texas's abortion ban contains a narrow exception for cases in which the pregnant person risks death or "substantial impairment of a major bodily function," but this provision is nebulously defined. After a court ruled in Cox's favor in 2023, Paxton stepped in to personally threaten medical providers with prosecution if they provided Cox with life-saving care. She finally obtained her abortion by leaving the state.

A *ProPublica* analysis found that, after Texas banned abortion at five weeks of pregnancy in 2021, the rate of sepsis increased by more than 50 percent for women hospitalized when they lost their pregnancies in the second trimester. Another study revealed maternal mortality shot up to 56 percent in Texas from 2019 to 2022 — much higher than the national increase of 11 percent — with Black women experiencing the largest spike. And a 2021 Tulane University review of national data found that, across the U.S., maternal mortality rates were higher in states with the most restrictive abortion policies. The U.S. already has a significantly higher maternal mortality rate than other rich nations. Low-income people of color, such as the patients served by Clínicas Latinoamericanas, are especially at risk for pregnancy complications.

This makes the attack on Rojas, Ley and Matos all the more despicable, as the attorney general's office seeks to paint itself as a steward of women's health.

"In Texas, life is sacred. I will always do everything in my power to protect the unborn, defend our state's pro-life laws, and work to ensure that unlicensed individuals endangering the lives of women by performing illegal abortions are fully prosecuted," Paxton said in a statement.

But Rojas does not face charges for endangering or harming her patients. In fact, the anonymous tip that led to Texas's investigation came from someone who claimed that a Clínicas Latinoamericanas facility was performing abortions "for some side money." According to the *Texas Tribune*, the tipster claimed to know of two patients who had received abortions and suggested they had acted irresponsibly by "not wanting to protect themselves using birth control" — an allegation that bears the markings of classic anti-abortion misogyny.

Texas's arrest of Rojas is clearly about social control, not patient safety. To fight against the state's abortion crackdown, we must recognize how the assault on reproductive rights and anti-immigrant policy are connected — and refuse to entertain the lies of the Christo-nationalists in power.

4 Apr - Serving City Time

A new book doubles as a detailed chronicle of, and guidebook to, surviving incarceration on New York's Rikers Island.

MORE:

by Josh Davidson (*Inquest*)

On Rikers, a small island in New York's East River, thousands of people live in captivity, held hostage in the city's largest jail. Since 1932 people have been shuffled onto and off of the island on a daily basis, unendingly, either being detained while awaiting trial or, less frequently, serving sentences deemed too short to merit being sent to upstate prisons. Those serving their sentences on the island do what is colloquially known as "city time."

The authors of the new book *City Time: On Being Sentenced to Rikers Island* offer an eye-opening look inside life at Rikers and the various trials and tribulations experienced by those serving city time. The book

is not a history of Rikers Island, nor is it a prison memoir of life inside. Nor is this the first time that the two coauthors, David Campbell and Jarrod Shanahan, have written about Rikers. In 2022 Shanahan published *Captives: How Rikers Island Took New York City Hostage*, a crucial look at the last 70 years at Rikers in relation to the rise of Black Power activism and mass incarceration. And in the 2023 collection *Rikers: An Oral History*, Campbell is one of 130 people who shared their deeply personal accounts of being held captive on the island. Unlike either of these previous works, however, *City Time* offers a comprehensive examination of daily life on Rikers Island as recounted by two men who served brief stints on the island for their political activism.

Full disclosure: Campbell and I corresponded while he was incarcerated at Rikers. While imprisoned he had an essay featured in the *Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners* calendar (of which I am a collective member); and, post-release, he was kind enough to share some of his experiences behind bars in a book I coedited, *Rattling the Cages: Oral Histories of North American Political Prisoners*.

With thirteen chapters covering everything from intake to release—including food, hygiene, interpersonal relationships, mental health, and substance abuse—*City Time* offers readers evocative firsthand accounts of the conditions of confinement for those held on the island, those working daily to “do their time” rather than let their time do them. Surviving Rikers demands careful navigation of the nuances, subtle gestures, particular terminology, de facto and de jure rules, and the routines of incarcerated people and guards alike.

Campbell and Shanahan provide behind-the-scenes snapshots of how these nuances and rituals work and how they are utilized by those serving city time to bring order and a sense of empowerment to their daily lives. *City Time* paints a vibrant picture of state repression and structural neglect, of violence and uncertainty, of navigating intra-gang relations, and of how acutely many incarcerated people lack for mental health services. Things that may sound trivial to those of us on the outside—taking someone’s seat at the cafeteria, an unintentional hand gesture or nod, changing the channel on the common room TV, not cleaning the shared phone after using it—can be invitations for conflict. And yet there remains a sense of hope, a shared vision of a light at the end of the tunnel, that enables those held on Rikers to find common ground. As the authors note, “after a couple months of city time, solidarity with other inmates, especially in the face of hostility from staff, is already an engrained response.”

While the authors’ own experiences inside the most renowned jail in the United States serve as the book’s backbone, the personal is buttressed by ample facts, statistics, commentary, and history sourced from a variety of ethnographers, sociologists, prison historians, fellow incarcerated people, and even former guards and employees of the jail. Combined, these personal observations and scholarship help to illustrate the structural racism, socioeconomic violence, and ingrained misogyny that are foundational to the carceral system as a whole.

It is worth noting that *City Time* was written by two scholars. Campbell and Shanahan took their politics from the classroom into the streets, and it is for this that they were convicted. Shanahan was charged with assaulting an officer during a march on the Brooklyn Bridge to protest the grand jury’s refusal to indict the officers involved in the police killing of Eric Garner. Campbell was arrested at an antifascist protest of an alt-right gala in Hell’s Kitchen. Faced with city time, Campbell and Shanahan approached it as academics, analyzing and interpreting their repressive surroundings, learning the social world of imprisonment, and ultimately producing a critical study of an oft-overlooked aspect of the carceral system.

While the jail system is “a stopgap measure, and a particularly violent one at that, for larger social problems attendant to capitalism and its inherent racialized inequality,” the authors note that “jails tell us a great deal about the broader social context in which they operate.” As they point out, while volumes have been written on mass incarceration, very little has been published on the experiences of short-stay confinement. As the Prison Policy Initiative illustrates, there are nearly twice as many local jails as there are state and federal prisons in the United States, and, in 2022, “about 469,000 people entered prison gates, but people went to jail more than 7 million times.” With numbers like that, putting a jail like Rikers under the microscope—as *City Time* does—is vitally important.

The COVID-19 pandemic coincided with Campbell's incarceration on Rikers, providing him with an up-close look at what happens when a widespread consensus emerges among the U.S. population demanding the mass release of people held in jails and prisons. Rikers was a global epicenter of COVID-19, and some 300 people doing city time on Rikers were released, "suddenly deemed able to freely walk the streets." Campbell describes how the pandemic "uprooted whatever remained of the ordinary daily routines." After three quarters of those in his dorm were released due to the pandemic, "the living environment of those left behind flipped from one of scarcity to one of abundance" as those released left behind their belongings.

The carceral system thrives on the dehumanization and repression of those unwillingly held, but *City Time* turns this notion on its head, centering the human beings who are forced to cohabitate on this small island in the middle of a river, surrounded by the New York City skyline and the possibilities that lay just out of reach. For organizers, prison abolitionists, family, and loved ones of those held captive on Rikers—and for those who may be facing time on the island for their actions, political or otherwise—this book is a must-read, providing insight and knowledge into how to survive one's jail experience with dignity and determination.

Until the Close Rikers campaign is successful in shuttering this notorious jail once and for all, *City Time* serves as a how-to manual for maintaining one's humanity in the face of the constant repression and mundanity of life on Rikers Island. Once Rikers ceases operations—along with the abolition of all other jails, prisons, and places of confinement—then *City Time* will stand as a testament to the often arbitrary and needlessly brutal ways that the criminal legal system has sought to control and suppress marginalized populations and those willing and able to fight back.

5 Apr - Lawmaker proposes bill that could charge transgender Texans with fraud

Under HB 3817, Texans could be charged with "gender identity fraud" for identifying as a sex different from the one they were assigned at birth.

MORE:

by Gwen Howerton (*Houston Chronicle*)

Last year, the state of Texas barred transgender residents from changing their sex on state-issued driver's licenses and birth certificates to match their gender identity. Now, a Houston-area lawmaker wants to make that mismatch a crime punishable by prison time.

State Rep. Tom Oliverson filed a bill Wednesday that would amend the Texas Penal Code to create a new form of fraud: "Gender Identity Fraud." A person would commit "gender identity fraud" by "identifying the person's biological sex as the opposite of the biological sex assigned to the person at birth." Committing "gender identity fraud" under the proposal would be a state jail felony, the lowest level of felony in Texas. A person found guilty would be subject to up to two years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

House Bill 3817 would add "gender identity fraud" to the list of fraudulent crimes covered under the Texas Penal Code's Subchapter D, which includes crimes like deceptive business practices, commercial bribery and identity fraud. Oliverson's office did not respond to a request for comment.

Oliverson's proposal faces an uphill climb to become law. As the 3,817th bill filed during the 2025 legislative session, the bill is a low priority in the chamber. It also has no co-sponsors and has not yet been scheduled for a committee hearing. Callie Butcher, founder of Butcher Legal Group, a Dallas law firm that advocates for and serves the LGBTQ community, said that while Oliverson's bill faces slim odds of passing, it's in line with other bills that would restrict transgender people's freedom of expression.

"This is the kind of bill that keeps me up at night," Butcher said. "This fits right along with the agenda that we've been seeing pushed, for the past several sessions, specifically around policing of people's gender and how they're able to identify themselves on documents and in sports leagues."

Butcher, who was previously the president of the Dallas LGBT Bar Association, said that HB 3817's language is in line with the rhetoric Republicans use to cast transgender identity as deceptive.

"The rhetoric we've seen used over the last three years is this idea that trans people are somehow deceiving or misrepresenting their identity, and using it for advantage," she said. "This bill pulls at that a little bit, and that's what scares me."

Upon taking office, President Donald Trump signed an executive order banning transgender troops from serving in the military. The order, which followed another order asserting that the federal government will only recognize two sexes, male and female, uses sweeping language to declare that being transgender "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an honorable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle." The order also asserts that trans identity is "not consistent with the humility and selflessness required of a service member."

In early 2024, Florida barred transgender residents from changing the sex on their state driver's licenses, a move that Texas made later that summer. But the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles went one step further, writing in a memo that "misrepresenting one's gender, understood as sex, on a driver's license constitutes fraud."

The Florida DHSMV did not clarify whether trans residents who had already changed their driver's licenses at the time of the policy change were committing fraud, and no Florida resident has been charged with any crime under the new policy. However, the state did cancel the license of nonbinary activist James Rose after right-wing social media account Libs of TikTok posted a video in which Rose described a loophole they used to change the sex on their license from "male" to "female."

While the House proposal makes no mention of identifying documents, Butcher said that like in Florida, she worries that trans people who have changed one, but not all, of their documents could face criminal charges when seeking housing, employment or medical care. She cited other bills, like ones that enshrine strict definitions of male and female into law and restrict sex changes on state-issued documents, as ways that Oliverson's bill could fit into a larger framework of criminalizing trans identity. "We have a lot of people who have only been able to update some of their documents before laws have changed," Butcher said. "When your identifying documents don't match what your biological sex was at birth, how are you supposed to prove who you are?"

Oliverson's bill is one of 58 pieces of legislation the Cypress representative has filed this session, including one that recognizes Jan. 29 as "Shen Yun Day" at the Texas Capitol and another that would make the abortion drug mifepristone a controlled substance. He has already established himself as an opponent of transgender rights. During the 2023 legislative session, Oliverson was a key sponsor of Senate Bill 14, the bill that banned hormone therapy and puberty blockers for trans youth in Texas and was ultimately upheld by the state Supreme Court in an 8-1 decision.

House Bill 3817 is yet another piece of legislation targeting queer and transgender Texans. Since bill filing opened in the winter of 2024, more than 50 pieces of legislation have been filed to curtail the rights of transgender Texans, including one that would expand SB 14 to ban gender-affirming care for adults as well as children.

Sadie Hernandez, a spokesperson for the Transgender Education Network of Texas, said in a statement that while these pieces of legislation are alarming for LGBTQ+ Texans, she stressed that many of the anti-LGBTQ+ bills filed each session never pass and that people should stay vigilant.

"Bills like this are likely to cause distress and anxiety in the trans community, especially now when we are facing threats at all levels of government," Hernandez said. "We are monitoring all bills relating to trans rights and will keep the community updated with bills that are at the alarming part of the legislative

process. We do not want trans and gender-expansive Texans to be exhausted before it's time to hit the ground running at the Capitol."

6 Apr - Stecco sentenced to 42 months prison

Italy: Anarchist comrade Luca Dolce, aka Stecco, sentenced to 3 years and 6 months prison.

MORE:

via *Act for Freedom Now!*

In the court of Trento the first grade trial took place against our friend and comrade Stecco, accused of having supported the friend and comrade Juan while he was in hiding and of having falsified identity documents. In a summary trial Stecco was sentenced to 3 years and 6 months' prison (even more than that requested by the Prosecution).

This sentence seems very much like a warning: whoever helps fugitives and anyone on the run, will pay dearly. Yesterday's sentence matches the truly impressive deployment of men and means that led to Stecco's arrest. On this last point, as seen from the files of operation "Diana", a synthesis emerges of what it would be useful for comrades to know concerning the enemy's weaponry.

A gathering in solidarity with Juan and Stecco took place outside the court, in particular against obligatory video conference yet again.

7 Apr - Antifascist Gino released ahead of extradition judgement

The defense cited grim reports of "white torture" in Hungarian prisons, including permanent solitary confinement and 24-hour surveillance.

MORE:

by Alisa-Ece Tohumcu (*Freedom News*)

After five months in Fresnes Prison, Rexhino "Gino" Abazaj, a 32-year-old Albanian anti-fascist activist, was released under judicial supervision yesterday. Arrested in Montreuil in November 2024, he faces up to 24 years in prison if extradited to Hungary for alleged violence against neo-Nazis. His case, which has sparked a widespread mobilization from activists, unions, and politicians, will be decided by the Paris Court of Appeal on April 9.

Gino's arrest stems from his alleged involvement in clashes during the far right "Day of Honor" gathering in Budapest in 2023. Seventeen other anti-fascists have been arrested in the case, including Italian MEP Ilaria Salis who spent 15 months in pre-trial detention, and Maja T who was extradited to Hungary last year. In January, seven anti-fascists wanted in the case turned themselves in.

During yesterday's hearing, prosecutors questioned the feasibility of house arrest due to issues with Gino's housing documentation. However, his legal team defended the arrangement and presented a job offer as further proof of stability. Gino himself addressed the court, expressing the strength of his support network. After deliberation, the court ruled in his favor, granting release without electronic monitoring.

While Hungarian authorities accuse anti-fascists of participating in a "criminal organization" and committing violent acts., neo-Nazi participants in the same clashes were released without prosecution. Hungary's vague assurances about detention conditions and trial fairness have also drawn sharp criticism. The defense cited grim reports of "white torture" in Hungarian prisons, including permanent solitary confinement and 24-hour surveillance. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture has documented overcrowding, inhumane conditions, and systemic abuse.

Hungary's judiciary, weakened under Viktor Orbán's rule, faces mounting EU criticism. The 2016 dismissal of a judge who criticized judicial reforms and ongoing protests by Hungarian magistrates highlight deep concerns about political interference in legal processes. "There is an obvious lack of

separation of powers,” Gino’s lawyers argued, adding that France must not become complicit in an unfair political prosecution.

“The charges are disproportionate. The process is unfair. The risks are real,” declared the Committee for the Liberation of Gino. “France must refuse this extradition.” Outside the courthouse, supporters repeated the chant: “Free Gino! Free Maja! Free all antifas!”

9 Apr - Update on Casey Goonan’s case

Sentencing hearing postponed and more evidence entered into discovery

MORE:

Casey’s sentencing has been rescheduled to June 10th, 1 pm, at the Oakland federal courthouse. We will be mobilizing court support again for this hearing so stay tuned for confirmation and guidelines a few weeks before that date. We hope it won’t be rescheduled yet again but know that is a possibility. Also of note is that since the plea deal the US Attorney has entered substantial new material into evidence consisting of a large amount of phone call audio and copies of correspondence between Casey and supporters obtained via the jail’s monitoring of communications. This is concerning, but let it serve as a reminder that all comms into jails and prisons are actively monitored and that it is incumbent upon everyone to maintain responsible communication habits.

Rescheduling the sentencing hearing also means there is more time to people who know Casey personally to send the lawyers letters of character to file with the judge. If you want the guidelines and details, hit us up at csccommittee@proton.me.

Health and well being

As you probably know Casey has had a very difficult year health wise, but has been doing better physically in the last month even though they have repeatedly gotten sick from their food. As a result, they have been spending a lot of time in bed, and haven’t been up for doing much letter writing lately. Letters are always appreciated but correspondence is also challenging due to 2-4 week delays in receiving mail. The emotional toll of the sentencing date being moved and continuing to be in the limbo of Santa Rita is taking a toll on their sleep and mental health. But they are doing their best to stay on top of their program and keep their energy and spirits up.

Visits

Visits are very appreciated by Casey! They can be in person at the jail or by video. For all the details for scheduling in person or video visits: shorturl.at/QiiQ6

Support the Casey Goonan Legal Defense Fund

Casey is still in need of ongoing support to cover legal costs, restitution and fines. Though they’ve had some great support, we have a way to go. In addition to the cost of legal defense, sentencing will definitely mandate substantial restitution and fines. Thank you so much to all those who have already contributed and organized support!

Some ways to support:

- Throw fundraising events and raffles
- Spread the word, share posts, and directly contact large donors.
- Print up a QR code for the Chuffed account, share the details of the case and the legal defense fund while tabling at events
- Send funds directly to the Chuffed account at chuffed.org/project/SupportCasey

You can reach out to us at cscommittee@proton.me or the [freecaseynow](#) Instagram for any questions about collaboration, promotion, or guidance on fundraising.

11 Apr - ‘Cop City’ legal case could cast spotlight on US police foundations’ activities

Case related to Atlanta project raises issue of state open record laws, and whether they apply to police foundations

MORE:

by Timothy Pratt (*The Guardian*)

A legal case in Atlanta stemming from the controversial “Cop City” project is being closely watched because it has the potential to cast a spotlight on the activities of police foundations nationwide.

The case raises the issue of state open records laws, and whether they apply to police foundations. The private foundations exist in every major US city, with more than 250 nationwide, according to a 2021 report by research and activist groups Little Sis and Color of Change.

The foundations have been used to pay for surveillance technologies in cities like Baltimore and Los Angeles without the contracts being subject to public scrutiny, according to the report.

In the Atlanta case, a judge is considering 12 hours of testimony, related case law and evidence in a lawsuit that concerns whether records such as board meeting minutes from the Atlanta Police Foundation (APF) are subject to the state’s open records law. If they are, they must be released to plaintiffs: a local digital non-profit news outlet and a Chicago-based research organization.

Although it is a private entity, the police foundation is the driving force behind the controversial police training center colloquially known as “Cop City” and which has attracted global headlines after police shot dead Manuel Paez Terán, or “Tortugueta”, an environmental activist protesting the project.

At the same time, the prosecution of anti-“Cop City” activists – especially using Rico laws usually reserved for organized crime – has prompted accusations that the state is using police and the courts to crush dissent and free speech.

The open records complaint, filed last year on behalf of non-profit news outlet Atlanta Community Press Collective (ACPC) and digital transparency research organization Lucy Parsons Labs, details how numerous records queries to the foundation under Georgia’s Open Records Act were ignored.

After a two-day bench trial last week, Fulton county superior court judge Jane Barwick must now decide whether to order the foundation to release those records, including a “line-item construction budget” and contracts.

It was probably the first such lawsuit nationwide, University of Chicago sociology professor Robert Vargas told the Guardian last year – and is being followed closely by researchers and activists alike.

One of the hallmarks of police foundations is how difficult it is to get information out of them,” said Gin Armstrong, executive director at LittleSis and the Public Accountability Initiative. “From a research point of view, this case could open up possibilities ... in understanding where money is coming from for policing.”

“A ruling here that the Atlanta police foundation is subject to meaningful public oversight [by releasing the records] would send a very important signal,” said Jonathan Manes, senior counsel at the MacArthur Justice Center.

One reason, he said, was the high profile of the \$109m training center project. Built on a 171-acre (70-hectare) footprint in a forest south-east of Atlanta, opposition to the center has come from a wide range of local and national organizations and protesters and is centered on concerns such as unchecked police militarization and clearing forests in an era of climate crisis.

Atlanta police, and the foundation, say the center is needed for “world-class” training and to attract new officers.

The movement against the center dates to 2021 and has included the destruction of construction equipment and the arson of Atlanta police motorcycles and a car. It has also included efforts to mount a referendum on the training center that gathered signatures from more than 100,000 voters – and continues to languish in court – as well as historic levels of public participation in city council meetings, lawsuits, numerous protests, and support from national environmental and civil rights groups.

Despite the years of protests and worldwide media coverage – and although the APF built the center, with corporate and taxpayer funds – the foundation and its CEO, former Secret Service leader Dave Wilkinson, have largely escaped public notice. Most attention has centered on Atlanta’s police department (APD), which will be using the center, and local and state governments.

Because of this, the lawsuit and last week’s bench trial – meaning the judge decides, not a jury – draw attention to the APF. The APF is one of the nation’s largest and most well-funded police foundations, with support from companies like Delta, Wells Fargo and Home Depot. Wilkinson is also the highest-paid among police foundation CEOs nationwide, with a 2022 salary of \$500,000.

In his hours of testimony last week, Wilkinson revealed his take on ACPC, which began reporting on the training center in late 2021, filling a vacuum left in local media exemplified by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution failing to disclose in much of its news and opinion coverage of the project that Alex Taylor, CEO of the paper’s owner, Cox Enterprises, had led a multimillion-dollar fundraising drive for the foundation.

Wilkinson testified that he thought ACPC would be “giving information to ... anarchists” – referring to protestors who committed acts of property destruction or vandalism – and that, in withholding information, he was “trying to protect people from harm”.

He and others – including Alan Williams, project manager for the training center – offered hours of detailed descriptions of protests, including cellphone videos and news clips showing protestors throwing rocks, lighting fireworks and screaming such chants as “Fuck you Alan!”

Matt Scott, executive director of ACPC, said: “They were doing the best they could to make ACPC look like an organization intent on causing harm – but they brought no evidence against ACPC.”

Manes found the APF’s stance “deeply chilling – the idea that the press is responsible for how people use or react to information”.

In her closing argument, Joy Ramsingh – one of three attorneys who represented plaintiffs pro bono, along with Samantha C Hamilton and Luke Andrews – said that Wilkinson “clearly believes that if ... he feels [open records requestors] are bad people, then they should be denied Open Records Act requests. But [the law] is not governed by our feelings.”

The police foundation and its lawyer, former Georgia US chief justice Harold Melton, also argued that the foundation was no different from other private entities that work with government, whether corporations such as Chick-fil-A or other non-profit organizations – and so, like these entities, it should not be subject to open records laws.

Melton declined to comment on the case. The APF did not respond to a query from the Guardian.

Ramsingh countered this notion rhetorically in court: “Is there any Chick-fil-A that calls itself Atlanta police Chick-fil-A and only serves chicken nuggets to APD?”

Ed Vogel, a researcher at Lucy Parsons Labs, said: “If APD didn’t exist, APF wouldn’t exist – it gives the ability to wealthy people and corporations to organize and mobilize funds in a way that supports their interests, without any public oversight.”

Ramsingh said she hopes the case “helps shine a light on what police foundations do, and illuminates their reach”. In Atlanta, that includes not just raising money for the training center, but building and managing it. “Most people have no idea there’s this whole other entity making decisions on public safety.”

12 Apr - Imam Jamil Al-Amin Medical Update: Let's turn it up for his release!

A video message from the son of Imam Jamil states, "We Have 10 Months - Allah Knows Best"

MORE:

The doctors say we have 10 months left for my father, but Allah knows best, the struggle continues. We've successfully raised the funds for the docuseries and are making progress on the legal front, but we still understand this is a political battle that will ultimately require the collective voices of the people. As always, we remain committed to fighting until there is nothing left to fight for, and appreciate everyone’s prayers and support.

12 Apr - The case against Mahmoud Khalil is meant to silence American dissent

On Friday afternoon, a federal immigration judge in Louisiana ruled that Mahmoud Khalil, the lawful permanent resident who was arrested last month for his advocacy for Palestinian rights at Columbia University, was removable – that is to say, deportable – under the law.

MORE:

by Moustafa Bayoumi (*The Guardian*)

Let's be absolutely clear about how outrageous this decision is. The judge, Jamee Comans, had given the Trump administration a deadline to produce the evidence required to show that Khalil should be deported. In a functional state, such evidence would rise to a standard of extreme criminality necessitating deportation.

But not in this case and certainly not with the Trump administration, which has summarily deported hundreds of Venezuelan men based not on any verifiable criminal activity but simply on the basis of their body art. In response to the judge's order, the secretary of state, Marco Rubio, produced a flimsy one-and-a-half-page memo that admits that Khalil has engaged in no criminal conduct. Instead, the memo, citing an arcane law, states that Khalil's "past, current, or expected beliefs, statements, or associations that are otherwise lawful ... compromise a compelling US foreign policy interest". In other words, the government is saying that Khalil's views – including even his future views – are sufficient grounds for his deportation.

Make no mistake. The government is seeking to deport Khalil solely for his constitutionally protected speech, a protection which applies to everyone in the United States. If the government succeeds, you could well be next. And don't think that your citizenship will protect you. If the government can deny the basic right of freedom of speech to lawful permanent residents, what's to stop them from going after citizens next? (The administration already has a plan to denaturalize US citizens.)

Do we really want to live in a country where the government can decide which ideas are allowed to be heard and which cannot? I'm surprised that I even have to write these words. In an open society, free debate is encouraged and needed, while in a closed society, lists of proscribed ideas and people circulate and proliferate, and it's frighteningly clear which way we're headed. The Trump administration has already

banned the use of words and phrases such as "equity", "women" and "Native American" from government websites and documents, showing us how the open door of American democracy is slamming shut faster and louder than we could have imagined. And Khalil's case is the test of what this government can achieve.

Rubio alleges that Khalil engaged in "antisemitic protests and disruptive activities, which fosters a hostile environment for Jewish students in the United States". But he provides no evidence whatsoever. Meanwhile, here's what Khalil told *CNN* last year: "As a Palestinian student, I believe that the liberation of the Palestinian people and the Jewish people are intertwined and go hand-by-hand, and you cannot achieve one without the other. Our movement is a movement for social justice and freedom and equality for everyone."

It would seem that Rubio believes the phrase "freedom and equality for everyone" undermines US foreign policy interests. He may finally be right about something. But he's wrong about Khalil, who clearly is not antisemitic. If Rubio wanted to cleanse the country of the noxious hatred of Jewish people, he could start by examining members of his own party. Marjorie Taylor Greene once speculated publicly that California wildfires were started by a beam from "space solar generators" linked to "Rothschild, Inc", a disgusting nod to bizarre antisemitic conspiracy theories. Robert F Kennedy Jr said that the coronavirus had been manipulated to make "Ashkenazi Jews and Chinese people" the most immune to Covid-19. Elon Musk can barely keep his arm from extending into a salute, Dr Strangelove-style.

It's not some illusory antisemitism that has brought the wrath of the Trump administration raining down on Khalil. It's the fact that he was standing up for Palestinian rights and calling out Israel's actions, labelled genocidal by jurists, experts and international human rights organizations alike. But the US government does not want the American people to even entertain this discussion, which includes American complicity in this human catastrophe that is also US foreign policy, and so it will use every means at its disposal to forestall the possibility, including the bluntest instrument in the political book: mass fear.

The attempt to deport Khalil is meant primarily to discipline the people of the United States into silence and conformity. For that reason alone, the government's actions must be resisted. Healthy societies are based on free thinking and dissent. Unhealthy societies mobilize fear and intimidation to regulate opinion and manufacture consent. Today, that consent is about Israel. Tomorrow, it will be about something else. Either way, it will never be your choice, and it will always be theirs.

Many legal observers were anticipating today's ruling by Judge Comans. Immigration judges are appointed by the Department of Justice. As such, they are employees of the executive branch and not the federal judiciary. The *New York Times* even noted that, had Judge Comans dissented from the government, she would also have "run the risk of being fired by an administration that has targeted dissenters". The ACLU speculated that the decision to deport Khalil had been "pre-written", as it was delivered so fast. And Judge Comans also stated that the constitutional questions raised by the case will be heard in federal court in New Jersey and not in immigration court in Louisiana.

That doesn't mean that Judge Comans couldn't have ruled otherwise. On the contrary, the decision by Judge Comans is another dangerous illustration of how much power the executive branch in the United States always wields, how much more power the Trump administration is willing to assume, and how deferential the institutions that could rein in this administration have become.

This structural cowardice on the part of these institutions is doing great harm to the integrity of American democracy, often expressed in some sort of embarrassed whisper. Khalil, on the other hand, speaks loudly and eloquently for his position. At the end of his hearing in Louisiana, Khalil asked to address the court. "You said last time that there's nothing that's more important to this court than due process rights and fundamental fairness," he said. "Neither of these principles were present today or in this whole process. This is exactly why the Trump administration has sent me to this court, 1,000 miles away from my family. I just hope that the urgency that you deemed fit for me are afforded to the hundreds of others who have been here without hearing for months."

13 Apr - Updates on Anarchist comrade Salvatore Vespertino Ghespe

Italy: After about two years, on the night of February 14-15, 2025, a police arrest ended Ghespe's status as a fugitive.

MORE:

via Act for Freedom Now!

From the moment of his arrest, the Spanish state guards were immediately notable for their characteristic cowardice. The beatings, threats, and what even the comrade recognized as psychological and physical torture led him to make an extreme act in order to be able to escape from a situation of absolute danger to his safety. In order to leave the Soto del Real prison in Madrid, he cut the veins of his arms and was transferred to the psychiatric hospital. As a matter of procedure, endangering one's life leads consequently to a TSO (psychiatric compulsory treatment), so the comrade was inoculated with sedatives and antipsychotics. He is very concerned to point out that the act was not done with suicidal intentions, nor did such thoughts ever cross his mind. The amount of blood he lost was such that he had to receive transfusions.

During his stay in the psychiatric ward, he continued to suffer torture, such as pressure on open wounds by hospital staff. After being discharged from the hospital, on March 4 he was extradited to Italy, specifically to the Rebibbia prison in Rome, his first stop after his flight from Madrid.

On March 20, he was transferred to Spoleto prison and placed in the infirmary.

After an argument with a guard, he was given another TSO, being sedated forcibly whilst it was described on the papers as a voluntary choice.

Today, Ghespe is resisting, alone in his cell, waiting for permission to be visited by his partner. We invite all comrades to flood him with letters, books (also in Spanish) and solidarity, and we remind the call for a solidarity meeting under the Spoleto prison on April 26.

13 Apr - Massimo Passamani imprisoned in "semi-freedom"

ITALY: From Wednesday, our dear friend and comrade Massimo finds himself in the prison of Spini di Gardolo, in the so-called "semi-freedom" regime.

MORE:

via Act for Freedom Now!

This stems from an accumulation of definitive sentences of 2 years and seven months (the main sentence, of little over 2 years, is related to clashes that took place in Rovereto on the occasion Salvini's visit: one of the episodes for which Giulio also finds himself locked up). Given that his request for semi-freedom has been accepted, in about two weeks' time he will be able to go out to work: which attenuates, but doesn't extinguish, the rage of knowing him imprisoned.

We know that he is well, in company of a large bag full of books, an MP3 full of metal and his serene resolve. Till we embrace him again, we send him all our solidarity and love.

13 Apr - Ruslan Siddiqi Transferred to "Matrosskaya Tishina"

Russia: This was revealed during session at the 2nd Western District Military Court in Moscow 9th of April, where Ruslan's pre-trial detention was extended for another six months.

MORE:

by Moscow Anarchist Black Cross (Avtonom)

The court also announced the date of the first substantive hearing — it will take place on April 15 at 11:00 AM, in the same court.

Write a letter to Ruslan at his new address — our comrade should know he's not facing the system alone, especially ahead of a trial that could result in a life sentence.

You can read more about Ruslan Siddiqi in his monologue: avtonom.org/en/news/you-could-call-me-partisan-ruslan-siddiqi-recounts-his-anti-war-actions

17 Apr - Food Worker Zine

WHAT: Zine Release

WHEN: 6:00pm, Thursday, April 17th

WHERE: P.I.T. - 411 South 5th Street, Brooklyn

COST: FREE

MORE:

Featuring performances by Clay Street, Dommer, and an open mic. Have a story about your stupid boss to tell? A rant to get off your chest? A resignation email in your drafts to read? An organizing story to share? Hop on the mic and let it all out among fellow workers!

24 Apr - Trusted Laws: Mumia, Universities, & Palenstine

WHAT: Webinar

WHEN: 7:30pm, Thursday, April 24th

WHERE: Online (register at tinyurl.com/April24-Mumia)

COST: FREE

MORE:

Join Us in Celebrating Mumia Abu-Jamal's 71st Birthday. This is a momentous occasion for supporters to gather together in meaningful ways to honor Mumia's life story and send the strong message that we will not stop until he is freed. This webinar will shed light on the systemic issues that creates and perpetuates a cycle of political prisoners worldwide, featuring law students and activists who will share their perspectives on how the "constitutional law—in the land of the free"—is increasingly weaponized to repress dissent and create political prisoners.

This event and beyond is A Call to Action for Justice and Liberation. Help us spread the word!

26 Apr - Saxapahaw Prison Books Packing Party

WHAT: Book packing

WHEN: 4:00pm, Saturday, April 26th

WHERE: P.I.T. - 411 South 5th Street, Brooklyn

COST: FREE

MORE:

Join Saxapahaw Prison Books to get packages of books loaded up and sent out to prisoners.