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Updates for April 16th

31 Mar - 16 Years in Prison

Chile: Please read the following from the comrade Marcelo Villarroel.

MORE:

On March 15, 16 uninterrupted years of imprisonment were completed since I was arrested in San Martín de los Andes, province of Neuquén, a territory squatted by the Argentine state while fleeing under orders of search and captured by the Chilean state.

The causes that animated this moment of clandestinity and that were profusely disseminated in the epoch are already well known:

I was sentenced to 14 years for two bank robberies. On December 16, 2009, I was expelled from Argentine territory to be tried in Chile.

At present, I continue with 46 more years of convictions for cases emanating from Pinochet's military justice system in the early '90s, framed in the urban guerrilla practices of my former militancy in the extinct armed group Mapu-Lautaro for more than 3 decades.

I am a hostage for reasons of state since from the power itself they have violated their shameful legality to keep me locked up and I belong to that segment of revolutionary prisoners of the world over whom the ferocious punishment of the State hangs, for not giving up, for not keeping silent, for maintaining inalienable anti-authoritarian convictions and, as I have said before, for a firm belief in anarchy.

These 16 years of daily resistance to prison confinement have been possible thanks to the loyalties, affections and loves of people who encourage me without pause, to the incessant persistence of wills that are reinforced through insurrectionary simplicity, to the strong bonds of brotherhood in struggle with different territories and languages that with the same language of war we are forging common paths and certainly this resistance would not be possible if not for the ideas and convictions that guide me.

After 16 years in prison, the struggle for my exit to the street continues persistently. On the legal side, they are focused on the annulment of Pinochet's military justice system, where there are efforts to achieve such a long-awaited goal.

This 2024 is a crucial year in this persistent campaign and from here I make the direct call to deepen Solidarity in all its forms and possibilities to achieve my release from prison.

These are intense times of definitions in which actions must go beyond mere words full of good intentions and hence the urgent call to contribute in this concrete moment of struggle.

In a new March in the region squatted by the Chilean state, we vindicate the Young Combatant as an expression of historical continuity in the subversive struggle against the state, the prison and capitalism and from here an unstoppable eternal cry for each of those who have fallen... for Eduardo, Rafael and Pablo Vergara Toledo, Luis Silva Jara "el Chakita", for Andrés Soto Pantoja, Pablo Muñoz Moya, for Norma Vergara Cáceres, Alejandro Sosa Durán, for Claudia López, Jhonny Cariqueo, Mauricio Morales and Sebastián Oversluij, for our eternal Luisa Toledo And for all those who do not renounce, nor forget and continue to feed our Memory of Resistance and Subversion.

Fraternal embrace for all the anti-authoritarian prisoners of the world who continue to contribute to the struggle.

All my newen [strength] to the anarchist, subversive and Mapuche prisoners in the Chilean prisons who continue with dignity along the path of Conflict.

My respects to the different communities of anti-authoritarian struggle that are weaving Anti-Prison Internationalism in different territories around the world.

To all who dare to challenge the normality of what exists in the here and now, attacking, in the present, the social peace of the rich towards total liberation.

March 31st – If the Streets Could Talk by Mónica Caballero

If the streets of this city could talk, they would tell us stories of barricades and fire, mixed with sweat, blood and tears. In those stories would be the small and resilient figure of Luisa Toledo, who with a couple of words moved generations, she was also the one who, for many years after the murder of her sons Eduardo and Rafael at the hands of the police, never stopped going out into the streets so that their death and especially their life as young combatants would not be forgotten.

Today, March 29, new stories of barricades and fire will emerge, which will be raised for Eduardo and Rafael, and in turn for the dozens of young combatants who decided to take the step towards the offensive attack against domination.

The stories of yesteryear of the young people who fought the dictatorship give us a rich and nourishing path, in which the varied young people of today grew up and lay new foundations for those to come.

If the streets could talk, they would tell the stories of the young fighters of yesterday and today, and we have to do our best to make them tell the stories of those to come. Just as Luisa Toledo did with blood, sweat and tears.

Only those who forget die. May the barricades not stop burning.

April 14th - Mónica Caballero Transferred

Comrade Mónica Caballero was transferred this morning from San Miguel prison to the San Joaquín Women's Detention Center, under heavy security measures by the Gendarmerie operational group.

The information is still scarce, so we will update when we have more data on the reasons and consequences of this arbitrary transfer.

1 Apr - Jack Has Been Released

Directly from Jack's support website...

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In a significant development in Jack's legal battle, on March 29, a judge in Fulton County Court granted him bond! With this decision, Jack will be released from jail in the coming days, reuniting him with his loved ones and community. Fulton County often delays releasing people who have been granted bond, but we will advocate rigorously to ensure his quick release.

The cash bond amount was set for \$75,000 and Jack was ordered 24-hour house arrest. There were a number of other conditions set by the judge that restrict Jack's ability to work, engage in community, or even to meet with his lawyer at his office.

As Jack prepares to transition back to freedom, continued support remains crucial. Letters of encouragement and books sent to him during his time in incarceration have provided a lifeline, and we encourage supporters to maintain this solidarity.

Additionally, sustained advocacy and legal efforts will continue, with funds raised being allocated towards covering legal fees and the high costs associated with home detention and the inability to work while under house arrest. Together, we are committed to ensuring Jack stays free!

2 Apr - Raids on Anarchists Continue

Italy: On the morning of March 22, the DIGOS (political police) raided five homes in Rome and Umbria.

MORE:

Legal documents indicate that four people are under investigation for 270 bis (subversive association with the aim of terrorism) and under article 2 of law 895/1967 (law on the control of arms and explosives).

At the end of the searches, the material seized were the usual: computer media (smartphones, computers, external hard drives...) and publications, such as the latest issue of *Bezmotivny* and the publication *La Tempesta*, which had already been seized en masse a few weeks ago.

April 2nd - Solidarity Message for Anarchists Arrested in Sicily

GO AND EXPLAIN THAT IT'S SPRING

The winds of war are blowing. From the confrontation between NATO and Russia on Ukrainian soil to the genocide of the Palestinian people perpetrated by Zionist barbarism, the states of the Atlanticist bloc are moving to preserve their geopolitical dominance while those of the other side try to undermine them. For the exploited on both sides, if the bosses' plans are not stopped, the prospect is the same: misery, repression and death.

When states are preparing for confrontation with the enemy outside their borders, they begin to mobilize their populations: it has been reported in recent months that Denmark has extended military conscription to women as well, France wants to raise the age limit for reservists from 65 to 72 years, and Germany, after investing €100 billion in rearmament, is considering reintroducing compulsory military service.

But the mobilization of the population is not only a strictly military issue, it also involves the sphere of the imaginary through war information and the clearance of the presence of the army in the streets and in the places of culture and the production of ideology, as has happened in Palermo these days on the occasion of the International Forum for Peace, Security and Prosperity, an event in which thousands of middle school students, university students and cadets of military academies from different countries met to hear leading exponents of the military world talk about peace and prosperity: freedom is slavery, war is peace, ignorance is strength!

In order for the total mobilization against the external enemy to take place, the State also needs to wage war against its internal enemy: the rebels, those who with their voices and their actions make their negation resound. It is no coincidence, then, that in recent years we have witnessed a stiffening of penalties for comrades, of which the application of the 41bis prison regime to Alfredo Cospito and the accusation of terrorism to some anarchist comrades from Carrara for the publication of the newspaper *Bezmotivny* are perhaps the most striking cases.

And it is in this context that on March 21 the Palermo Police Headquarters carried out a pre-trial detention in prison and two signature obligations for three Antudo militants: the charges refer to the publication of a video showing the throwing of a Molotov cocktail at a headquarters of the Leonardo Spa armaments company in the Sicilian capital. The repressive operation is orchestrated by the National Anti-Mafia

Directorate, which in 2015 became the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Directorate, thus also starting to deal with political crimes.

All this should stir the minds of those who live on this island: we know all too well how the spectacle of the anti-mafia subsumes every imaginative impulse under the suffocating cloak of legalism and the cult of the servant of the State and how this spectacle is born and develops right here starting from our minds and our bodies, making it difficult to develop and put into practice the tension to emancipation from all domination. Initiating a radical critique of all this may be difficult, but it is an increasingly urgent act that is impossible to postpone.

We do not know – nor are we interested in knowing – who attacked the Palermo headquarters of Leonardo Spa on November 26, 2022, but we do know that when individuals find the lucidity and courage to return, in the form of emancipatory violence, some of the indiscriminate violence that this company of death distributes around the world, we can only be in solidarity, as we know that when a counter-information site gives voice to these actions, it is doing its job in the best possible way.

3 Apr - Activist Sentenced to Jail for Spray-Painting Custer Statue

Report on the sentencing of an anti-colonial activist in Monroe, Michigan.

MORE:

via It's Going Down

On Wednesday, March 20th, in front of a packed county courtroom in Monroe, Michigan, local anti-colonial activist Peatmoss Ellis was sentenced to a 30-day jail term for spray-painting a message of resistance on a statue of civil-war era genocide-perpetrator General Custer on Indigenous Peoples' Day in 2022.

First District Court Judge Amanda L. Eicher explicitly stated that she was assigning Ellis the maximum possible sentence in order to deter others from engaging in dissent.

“This heavy-handed sentence is a politically-motivated decision and the worst-case scenario for a misdemeanor,” said local climate activist John R. Sullivan. “The purpose of this decision is to uphold the legacy of genocide and white supremacy. The county wants to deter us from fighting back against the state’s past and ongoing crimes against indigenous and other racialized and oppressed people. The people’s response should therefore be the opposite of deterrence.”

Ellis is the co-director of a homeless shelter based in Ann Arbor, MI, and a regular volunteer at an animal sanctuary. Prior to sentencing Ellis, Judge Eicher sentenced multiple other people struggling with poverty and substance use issues to pay thousands of dollars in court fees and submit to extensive surveillance and probationary conditions.

“This is not only an attack on dissent against colonial legacy, it is also an attack on the poor,” said Sullivan. “Peatmoss serves an essential function in housing the local homeless population. By locking them up during this period of harsh weather, Judge Eicher is putting the most vulnerable members of our community in grave danger.”

Custer, who was originally from Monroe, Michigan, is responsible for the forced displacement and murder of thousands of Indigenous people. He led multiple attacks and treaty violations against the Lakota Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho. In 2021, the United Tribes of Michigan unanimously passed a resolution calling for the removal of his statue in Monroe as a symbol that is “widely perceived as offensive and a painful public reminder of the legacy of Indigenous people’s genocide and present realities of systemic racism in our country.” In 2020, an activist coalition led by people of color petitioned for the statue to be moved from downtown into a museum. In response to this petition and at least one other totaling nearly 25,000 signatures, Monroe city council stated they had no plans to discuss relocation of the statue.

“Despite the harsh sentence, Peatmoss was in good spirits throughout the day and was supported by so many of their friends and comrades in court,” said Ellis’s friend Chris Pierce. “The repressive sentence handed down by Judge Eicher hasn’t damaged Peatmoss’s spirit of resistance. They’re already working to advocate for fellow inmates at the Monroe County jail by organizing a protest to an initiative by the jail manager to collect and destroy inmates’ books and magazines.”

3 Apr - Trans Prisoners Overwhelmingly Thrown in Solitary Confinement

Hundreds of transgender people incarcerated in state prisons face solitary confinement and urge officials to craft new housing policies to keep trans people safer behind bars, according to a new report by the nonprofit Vera Institute of Justice and LGBTQ+-focused advocacy organization Black & Pink.

MORE:

by Adam M. Rhodes (*The Appeal*)

The February report was based on a survey of 280 transgender people—mostly trans women—incarcerated in 31 states. The report spells out both the disproportionate abuse trans people face—and the novel solutions they said are necessary to ensure their safety and their humanity. Such fixes include flexible housing policies, access to gender-affirming personal items, and the ability to form meaningful relationships with one another, among other suggestions.

"Prison is miserable, but people, unfortunately or fortunately, are resilient, and they find those communities within prison," Kenna Barnes, Black & Pink's advocacy manager, told *The Appeal*. "And they find those safe people, they find folks who are able to guide them through whatever they're navigating."

Prison and jail administrators consistently debate how—and where—to house transgender prisoners. Trans women, who are painted as threats to the safety of cisgender women, are often thrust into the center of these debates.

February's report highlights the challenges of crafting universal housing policies for a population that is far from monolithic.

According to the report, roughly 66 percent of trans women want to be housed with other women, but that leaves nearly 30 percent who do not. (The remaining 4 percent said they had no preference.) As for trans men—who are routinely overlooked in conversations about incarcerated trans people—nearly 58 percent said they want to be held in women's facilities. And for nonbinary people, 41 percent said they want to be housed in men's facilities, 47 percent said they prefer women's facilities, and the rest said they'd be okay with either.

A majority of all respondents said they would prefer a housing unit explicitly designated for trans people.

"It just goes against the way that prisons operate, which is having a single set of rigid rules that are applied unilaterally for everybody," Jennifer Peirce, a senior research associate at Vera, said in an interview. "But it really shows that if we take these issues seriously, we need to have rules and criteria that, yes, aren't clear, but that also give several options for people to do what works for them and not make assumptions that what creates safety for one person should therefore be applied to everybody in that category."

Following transphobic backlash over a pair of pregnancies involving a trans woman at a women's prison in New Jersey, the state in 2022 let prison officials cite "reproductive considerations" when overriding a trans prisoner's housing preference. But trans women in New Jersey said they face agonizing delays for gender-affirming care—which would alleviate those "considerations"—and have been pushed to mutilate themselves to speed up the surgery process.

Amid the backdrop of these housing issues, the report states that roughly nine out of every ten respondents said they've been in solitary confinement at some point. More than one-fifth were in solitary when they responded to the survey—with many saying it was for their safety.

But prolonged isolation comes with physical and mental health consequences. Prisons often force trans people to decide between two evils—violence from fellow prisoners and staff or the ramifications of isolation.

"The fact that that is presented as the only option for physical safety in a lot of cases just speaks to the crux of the problem," Peirce said. "And that this is really urgent, because you're removing someone from the threat of another incarcerated person, and then putting them directly into the risks that we all know even a few days in solitary carry."

As national debates continue about gender-affirming care for trans people, incarcerated trans people said their access to such care is limited and lackluster. Nearly half the respondents said healthcare providers in their facilities did not have any general knowledge about trans issues.

This report comes after some states have specifically taken aim at gender-affirming care for trans people behind bars. In April 2023, Indiana barred state funds from being used for gender-affirming care for trans people in state custody, though a state corrections spokesperson previously confirmed that neither the DOC nor its third-party medical providers have ever provided gender-affirming surgery. A similar bill sponsored by more than a dozen Republican state legislators also failed in Oregon last year. In 2022, Mississippi passed a law barring imprisoned people from changing their names.

The new report warns that even reforms that were once seen as a saving grace for transgender prisoners have fallen short. The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) lists specific provisions that would bolster the safety of trans prisoners, including individualized housing assignments—but respondents reported that many facilities have not implemented these policies.

Additionally, respondents also said prison staff weaponize PREA against trans prisoners—for actions such as holding hands with other prisoners—and retaliate against people who use PREA channels to complain about abuse.

Vera Institute and Black & Pink said they hope their work leads to policy changes and a shift in thinking about the harms of the criminal legal system overall.

"We hope that this report gets people to think differently about the reasons that people experience some of the things that they do and the effects on them," Peirce said. "And that it also, of course, motivates change in policy and practice, but also just more open-mindedness to listen and believe people."

3 Apr - 55th Anniversary of the NY Panther 21 Case

The trial of the New York Panther 21 was the moment in the Black liberation movement that ushered in an era of intensified state repression and violence and increasingly aggressive tactics by radical forces.

MORE:

by Dhoruba bin-Wahad (*Black Agenda Report*)

Fifty-five years ago on April 2, 1969, the NYPD's Bureau of Special Services (BOSS) swooped down on 21 members of the New York Chapter of the Black Panther Party in pre-dawn raids across the city.

This was the public beginning of the infamous New York Panther 21 Conspiracy Trial. Only 13 members of the New York Panthers actually stood trial, among whom were Dhoruba Bin-Wahad, Afeni Shakur, Sundiata Acoli. The Panther 21 Conspiracy case at the time would become the longest and most expensive conspiracy trial in the history of the Manhattan District Attorney's Office under the tutelage of the

celebrated District Attorney, Frank S. Hogan. It would ultimately mark the most humiliating defeat of his career.

The Panther 21 Case as it would come to be known, became a cause célèbre of America's anti-Vietnam war and anti-racist New Left and would highlight the public criminalization of Black radical movements by the then covert FBI CounterIntelligence Program, COINTELPRO and the federal government's collaboration with local police agencies to kill and imprison Black revolutionaries.

The indictments of Bobby Seale, Chairman of the Black Panther Party, in New Haven, Connecticut for the FBI contrived murder of Alex Rackley, and his subsequent trial in Chicago along with White anti-war radicals known as the "Chicago Seven", the murder of Chicago Panther leader Fred Hampton all followed within a year of the New York Panther 21 conspiracy indictment. The killings of Jonathan Jackson at the Marin County Courthouse, the Indictment of Angela Davis and her subsequent capture and trial, the murder of George Jackson in the California gulag, all followed in the wake of the New York Panther 21 conspiracy trial, and the subsequent acquittal of all its defendants two years later in May of 1971.

This legal repression and criminal persecution of the Black and White radicalism of the late sixties gave rise to the Black Liberation Army and the Weather Underground of the 70s and 80s as well as the imprisonment of scores of Black, White and Indigenous radicals like Dhoruba Bin-Wahad, Leonard Peltier, Sundiata Acoli, Sekou Odinga, Mutulu Shakur, and the forced exile of Assata Shakur, Michael Cetawayo Tabor, and Puerto Rican nationalists.

From that day in April to this day there are still Black and Indigenous political prisoners in jail: Mumia Abu Jamal, Imam Jamil Al-Amin (fka H. Rap Brown), Kamau Sididki, Veronza Bowers, Leonard Peltier, and others. The last of the generation of the loud.

3 Apr - Words From Anarchist Comrade Lucas Hernández

Chile: "From the cell," writes Lucas, "I remember the smell of the barricade, the smoking tires, the springs after the mattress was consumed, and the neighbors with their contributions to the campfire."

MORE:

via Informativo Anarquista

I remember like yesterday the hood, the gloves, the gun in the belly, the clean bullets, the heavy backpacks, the desire to see if one day, on the 29th, they will get paid this time and not us. I remember gathering the materials, coordinating with the comrades, going out into the street, the neighbor who told me "take care son," or the neighbor who asked me if I was going to hunt ghosts, the determined and eager steps to throw myself into the fight, the smell of gunpowder after the shot, the whistle of the first shot, I remember teary-eyed after the first tear gas, running towards the pole, the parapet and the moment. Moving forward dressed like the night, good times, which I hope many can and want to live, because it is necessary to return the blows, nothing can go unpunished.

On March 29, Mauricio Maigret, Paulina Aguirre, the brothers Eduardo and Rafael Vergara are commemorated, cowardly murdered, in memory of their ideas, their consequence and their courage that in a context of dictatorship and death dared to do something in the bloodiest moments of this country, without letting fear immobilize them. Motivated by inequality and love for their peers, neighbors, families and comrades, those desires for justice in the face of so much abuse that, as yesterday, is still present today, and as new generations learn from the history of those who fought before, detaching ourselves from arrogance, we must learn from the successes and mistakes in order to be more prepared against the reprisals of power. On the 29th, the street is ours, on the corners of the towns the scene of confrontation is generated.

A warm hug to those who take to the streets, to those who feel the duty to respond to the bullets, which killed several of our people, such as Sebastián Overluij, Norma Vergara, Emilia Bau, residents like Anibal Villarroel, respond and break the homicidal silence that killed 81 burned prisoners, or Macarena Valdés,

Alejandro Castro, Daniela Carrasco, Santiago Maldonado, to fight the brutality that killed Araceli Romo and Pablo Vergara, Matías Catrileo, the FPMR commanders José Miguel and Tamara, teachers with their throats slit, there are so many names that there would be no paper left. In the memory of those who lived and died dignified and with their principles, irreducible, because they are the dead of yesterday and who in other times fought the same enemies that we continue to face in the present and that continue to kill with impunity.

To break with comfort and intend to carry out the conflict, on this path there are different trenches, we have to know which one we are in and from there be able to contribute from good sense and humility, each gesture is a bullet, which one day can go through the bodies of those responsible, because in memory we also have to have the name of those who were the murderers of our dead like William Vera, Francisco Jara Jarpa, like the owners of RP Global, or the agents of the state, and the list would go on because there are many who enjoy impunity, the murderers are, live, and move peacefully through their neighborhoods, those who repress the people who protest in the towns and the prisoners in the prisons. There are so many lives to avenge, there are so many lives taken that so much blood cannot be thrown into oblivion.

Something has to be done, you can't spend it talking or waiting for moments, ideas without facts are just straw mill, they are mental masturbations, there is a lot to do, little to talk about, that is why we are afraid to educate ourselves, to learn, to be more strategic, to know how to recognize our mistakes and those of our comrades and learn from them, because nowhere do we find them nor do they give us a manual. It is natural to err, but improving is the work, to make us more dangerous and capable of facing and rising to the occasion and continue fighting against this system of bad distribution and domination, in the memory always of our dead!

April 8th - 86-Year Sentence Against Anarchist Comrade Francisco Solar Ratified

via *Informativo Anarquista*

On March 27, 2024, the appeals court reviewed the conviction of anarchist comrade Francisco Solar.

Finally, the judiciary ratified the sentence of 86 years in prison for explosive attacks against the powerful, repressors and the neighborhood of the rich, rejecting the request of the defense.

In practice, this sentence remains a disguised life sentence. We reiterate the call to overcome the impotence and frustration in the face of the ratification of this state attack, understanding the condemnation as a blow to the entire anarchist movement. Our solidarity legitimizes the attack and defends the comrades in the anarchic and informal action. Solidarity with those who attack the powerful and repressors! Francisco Solar to the street!

3 Apr - Freedom to Nikos Maziotis, Solidarity with the Guerrillas

Greece: Recently dozens of comrades (from Athens, Lamia, Patras, Thessaloniki) were in the city of Lamia, holding a solidarity meeting and a microphone interference and gathering in the city, a demo to Lamia court and a gathering outside of the prison of Domokos where the political prisoner Nikos Maziotis is being held.

MORE:

The mobilisation on 23 March was held in solidarity with the convicted member of the Revolutionary Struggle, anarchist comrade N. Maziotis. A supportive, politically, solidarity intervention on the occasion of the comrade's 5th in a row request for his conditional release, which has been systematically rejected for political reasons since January 2022. His new request was submitted on 12 March and is expected on the one hand the relevant recommendation of the prison prosecutor, and on the other hand the relevant decision by the competent judicial council of Lamia.

In preparation, on Friday 22 March, comrades of our assembly made an intervention in a local radio station reading the text/call of our assembly and also posters were put up in the city.

From the beginning of our arrival in the city, and even before we arrived in Lamia, there was a strong police presence. Traffic police, vehicles informed about our arrival in the city, while interventions and instructions were given by telephone to the driver of the Bus. At the same time, they were pressing for information about where and what movements we would make in the city, etc. At the point where we got off the bus, two squads of riot police and OPKE vehicles were already lined up, while around the Eleftherias Square there were civil cops and policemen from the Lamia police station. It should be noted that the numerous police forces and police cages create not only “inconvenience” to the city’s residents but also traffic congestion in the already narrow streets of Lamia, in a show of force with the presence of “law and order” in many neighborhoods of Lamia.

During the microphone interference and gathering in the city at Eleftherias Square, banners were hanged, texts were distributed and thousands of flyers were thrown. Then, on the way to the court, the originally planned gathering/intervention that we had planned turned into a demo with banners and slogans. Outside the court in Lamia, flyers were thrown, slogans were heard and a banner was hanged at the main entrance of the court.

There was also a strong presence of police forces with 2 squads of riot police, both at the courts and throughout our presence in the city, with civil cops, police vehicles etc. We arrived at Domokos prison at a scheduled time so that the prison courtyards were open and telephone communication with comrade Nikos Maziotis was possible. A convoy of Mats had blocked the road setting up a barrier before the entrance to the prison. We made a demo towards the prison with slogans of solidarity, while a few metres behind us, there was also a MAT bus, as well as OPKE vehicles and police cars. On the way to the prison, slogans were written on the roadway as also in the buildings. A telephone conversation with comrade Nikos Maziotis followed, which has been recorded, and fireworks were thrown by comrades

The demo of the solidarity movement until the final release of comrade Pola Roupa from the state hostage-taking and the immediate release of comrade Nikos Maziotis is the political basis of the assembly, as vigilance and preparedness constitute the active cells against the state and its mechanisms. We break the isolation, we undermine the mediation of the authority, we build direct social relations of struggling interaction and practical solidarity.

A short excerpt from our telephone conversation with comrade Nikos Maziotis during the gathering outside Domokos prison:

“I send you a big hug from within the walls, strength is something we all need. Both those on the outside and those inside the prison. We owe it to ourselves first and foremost, but more than that, we owe it to our comrades in struggle. We must also need to show that solidarity is not a concept, a word that we say out of habit, but that it is a real concept, that it is a basic principle of our world of values, that we carry it in our minds and in our hearts. That it is a part of our daily comradeship, that it is part of the society we want to build in place of the state and capital...”

April 3rd - Solidarity with anarchist political prisoner Errol

via Act for Freedom Now!

Freedom for Errol, an anarchist political prisoner in the holding cells of Diavata prison in Thessaloniki, who is awaiting a repeat hearing re his deportation from the Greek state, because he is an anarchist. On Wednesday 13/3, two banners of solidarity with anarchist Errol were hung in Heraklion, Crete.

The banners were placed at one of the entrance doors to the old town of Heraklion (Kommeno Bedeni) and at the entrance of an abandoned house in the area of Lakkos.

The positions expressed as slogans as “Freedom for those in the cells” and “Until the demolition of the last prison” are more imperative than ever, timeless and non-negotiable.

Strength and Solidarity to Errol who is for the umpteenth time in the last decade in the spotlight of the Greek state, through the services of ‘National’ and ‘State Security’, due to his energetic action and

participation in the Greek anarchist space. The repressive mechanisms activate the option of his expulsion from the geography authoritarian-controlled under the title of “Hellenic Republic” in which Errol is not naturalized.

Since 28/2, where he was arrested in Thessaloniki after the march for the state/capitalist crime in Tempi, he has been in captivity and at risk of deportation, once again, to the geography controlled under the title “French Republic”.

The prison term is vindictively that of detention, which means that he is deprived of any right he would have had (visits, telephone calls, yard access, activities, etc.) if he had been classified as a convicted or remand prisoner. The following is his last public text:

On Wednesday 28/02, after the march for the year’s anniversary of the capitalist murder of Tempe, I was stopped by the police in my attempt to approach the university. They were arresting me because of a deportation order against me, with a ban on entering Greek territory, because of my political identity as an anarchist.

During the physical check, a hacksaw blade was found under the soles of my holey shoes. Whoever feels a threat to his/her freedom, keeps on him/her the tools to find it again. I ate wood, Έφαγα ξύλο, τόσο όσο, so much so that my rage against the state and authority grew, and I was charged with gun possession and trespassing, as I was asked for fingerprints and refused.

I have been living illegally for years, with the daily threat of deportation and imprisonment, continuing to participate in the anarchist struggle until the destruction of the state and capitalism, holding in my heart the desire for an equal and free society, without slaughterhouses, poverty and authority. A daily routine that more and more comrades are likely to face with the implementation of the new criminal code. Already in the courts, the judges are warning the defendants that from May onwards they will go to jail much more easily. And as we know, there is always a place in jail for anarchists.

The conditions of detention at the Sub-Directorate of Megacars on Pontou Street in Menemeni, for me as well as for my fellow prisoners, are to be locked up twenty-four hours a day in the cell without going out for one moment. Conditions that after a few months’ captivity create difficulties even in walking.

As for me, I am waiting for a new deportation decision to be issued by the Directorate of Aliens in Thessaloniki, so that I can object to an administrative procedure, which will decide whether I will be put in a cell and sent like a parcel to the other side of Europe, or I will be released, with a deadline of one month, to leave the country alone. The decision on this objection will be made in the next 2 weeks.

Whatever happens, I will continue to stay and fight here in Greece. I won’t let any cop or any judge tell me what to do with my life. I will not let them take me away from the friends and comrades I love. Because the thirst for justice and individual free will is harder than iron and stronger than any state and “it is not sold anywhere in the market, neither a merchant bargains for it nor does it count like gold in the balance.

4 Apr - The Slow Death of a Prison Profiteer: Activism Brought Securus to the Brink

On the hook to repay \$1.3 billion of debt this year, the nation’s largest prison telecom company, Securus, is on the verge of bankruptcy.

MORE:

by Dana Floberg and Morgan Duckett (*The Appeal*)

Its failure would represent a remarkable victory for advocates—and a potential beginning of the end for the industry as we know it.

Last week, the nation’s largest prison and jail telecom corporation, Securus, effectively defaulted on more than a billion dollars of debt. After decades of preying on incarcerated people and their loved ones with exploitative call rates and other predatory practices that have driven millions of families into debt, Securus is being crushed under the weight of its own. In March, the company’s creditors gave the corporation an eight-month extension to pay up, urging its sale to a new owner to stave off an otherwise imminent bankruptcy.

Securus is one of two corporations that dominate roughly 80 percent of the U.S. prison telecom industry, forming an effective duopoly that thrives on the captive markets found inside the nation's lockups. Both companies are owned by private-equity firms: Securus, by Platinum Equity, and ViaPath (previously Global Tel Link), by American Securities.

The slow death of the largest player in this space is not accidental. It follows six years of intense advocacy to expose the vulnerability of the prison telecom industry's business model on both ethical and economic grounds. Organizers have waged a strategic war against Securus, educating investors and the public about the company's predatory practices while successfully advocating for legislation and regulation to rein them in.

With Platinum now on the hook to pay \$1.3 billion of Securus debt this year following a series of failed attempts to refinance, bankruptcy seems inevitable. The company's failure would represent a remarkable victory for advocates—and a potential beginning of the end for the prison telecom industry as we know it.

A Predatory Business Model

Together, Securus and ViaPath contract with 43 state prison systems and over 800 county jails. Their dominance of the market allows them to routinely charge incarcerated people and their families egregious rates for rudimentary communications services: A 15-minute phone call can run as high as \$8.25; a 25-minute video call up to \$15; and basic emails as much as \$0.50, or more with attachments. On top of this, telecom companies are raking in new revenue with digital tablets that offer media, including movies, songs, and games, at prices far above market rate.

The nature of agreements between these telecom providers and correctional agencies often further incentivizes the financial exploitation of the incarcerated, creating profit-sharing kickback schemes that provide prisons and jails with a portion of sales revenue. As a result, many agencies award contracts to the vendor with the highest commission, which often translates to the highest prices.

Facing extreme costs and abysmal or nonexistent wages, incarcerated people must often turn to their families to help pay for communication services. Families routinely face an impossible choice between accepting a call from a loved one inside and paying their bills. Many fall into debt due to these costs, and some are forced to cut contact entirely. The collapse of these bonds harms incarcerated people, their families and children, and society as a whole, with research consistently showing that family contact is critical for successful reentry upon release.

For years, corporations like Securus and ViaPath faced little scrutiny as they used this model to generate billions of dollars in revenue. More recently, however, these predatory practices have proven less viable. Despite raking in roughly \$700 million in revenues annually, Securus has been in the red for the last few years due in part to huge interest payments on debt taken out by Platinum Equity upon acquiring the corporation, as well as management fees it must pay the firm. ViaPath is facing a similar strain under massive debts that will begin coming due in 2025.

Interrupting Business as Usual

Securus was initially formed in 2004 after the merger of two smaller correctional telecom corporations. The company changed private equity hands several times before Platinum Equity acquired it in 2017. Platinum took out over a billion dollars in debt to put in the winning bid for Securus—a model that is typical for private equity buyouts. Today, Securus has racked up a total of \$1.6 billion in debt. While the private equity structure shields Securus from the scrutiny applied to publicly traded corporations, this debt is publicly traded and provides insight into its financial health.

Debt is priced relative to dollar, or par. Debt priced at 100 cents or more suggests lenders are confident that the corporation is doing well, can make interest payments, and will repay every dollar it borrowed.

Anything lower indicates the opposite. During the first two years of Platinum Equity's ownership, Securus' debt value was steady at par.

Things started to change in 2018 when a coalition led by the New York-based advocacy organization Worth Rises passed first-of-its-kind legislation in New York City to make jail calls free. In 2020, local advocates did the same in San Francisco. In 2021, Connecticut became the first state to pass legislation making prison and jail communication free. These early victories sent a powerful message to the industry: the exploitative status quo upon which Securus' profits depended was beginning to crumble.

While advocates continued to organize, the industry was still largely preoccupied with pursuing a strategy of growth through acquisition. In 2018, Securus sought to acquire ICSolutions, the third-largest player in the prison telecom market. But Worth Rises and national partners contested the deal, arguing to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that the merger would harm incarcerated people by reducing competition. If approved, the merger would have further consolidated the industry, putting roughly 90 percent of the market under Securus and ViaPath's control. The FCC agreed in April 2019, leading Securus and ICSolutions to abandon the deal.

The next step for advocates was to convince major investors to ditch Platinum Equity over its ties to Securus. In meetings over the next six months, they explained that Platinum's investment in the prison telecom giant presented substantial reputational and financial risks, especially as policymakers and regulators turned their attention to the industry. The strategy paid off. In September, the Pennsylvania State Employees' Retirement System denied Platinum Equity a \$150 million investment, citing the extensive negative press surrounding Securus.

In the wake of this campaign, Securus' debt dropped to distressed levels as low as 47 cents on the dollar. The corporation still had its contracts and enough cash flow to stay in business, but investors were showing little confidence that it would survive long enough to pay back its debts.

No Easy Exits

The COVID-19 pandemic rescued Securus, at least temporarily. With prisons and jails across the country locking down and banning visits, skyrocketing call volume and expanded digital tablet programs provided new fuel to the industry. While families struggled to stay healthy, financially afloat, and connected, Securus notched a 10 percent increase in revenue year-over-year from 2019 to 2020, significantly higher than the year before. Its debt pricing reflected this grim success, bouncing back to more than 90 cents on the dollar.

Advocates refused to back down, this time targeting Platinum Equity founder and CEO Tom Gores. In the fall of 2020, Worth Rises and the racial justice organization Color of Change called for his removal from the prestigious, mostly-billionaire board of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art over his ties to Securus. Hundreds of artists, curators, and collectors joined the campaign, and in less than a month, Gores was forced to resign. Two months later, Worth Rises took out a full-page ad in the sports section of the *New York Times* calling on the NBA to force Gores to sell the Detroit Pistons.

Platinum Equity and Gores were desperate to offload Securus and saw the company's pandemic-boosted financials as an opportunity to do so profitably. They planned to sell Securus to a special purpose acquisition company (SPAC), a public shell corporation formed solely to acquire and take a private corporation public without the scrutiny of an initial public offering.

With broad mandates, SPAC investors pony up millions without knowing much about what they're buying. Advocates quickly moved to change that, informing the SPAC's management and investors that the sale would make them the not-so-proud shareholders of an ethically bankrupt and financially unstable prison profiteer. In late 2022, the deal failed, forcing Platinum back to the drawing board.

“After endlessly pillaging impacted communities, we did not want Platinum to walk out the winner,” said Bianca Tylek, the executive director at Worth Rises. “They refused real change for years, so now, we weren’t going to allow them any easy exits.”

The deal’s collapse came as expiring prison restrictions and successful prison telecom regulations began to cut into the industry’s pandemic windfalls. In September 2022, California passed a bill to make calls free in state prisons. By the fall of 2023, Colorado and Minnesota had also mandated free phone calls for people in prison, and Massachusetts had become the first state to make all prison communication free in both prisons and local jails.

Around the same time, a decades-long fight in Congress finally led to the passage of the Martha Wright-Reed Just and Reasonable Communications Act. The legislation—named after Martha Wright-Reed, who first filed an FCC petition to reduce the price of prison calls so that she could stay in touch with her incarcerated grandson—secured the FCC’s authority to regulate rates for in-state calls from correctional facilities, which make up 80% of all prison and jail calls, and granted it regulatory authority over video calls for the first time.

The enactment of that legislation sent Securus’ debt prices tumbling once more.

The Looming Debt Wall

With its debt prices sinking, Securus faced newfound urgency: \$1.3 billion in debt was set to come due in 2024. Hundreds of millions more would follow in 2025. In May 2023, Platinum Equity announced a plan to go to the public debt market to refinance Securus’ debt with new bonds. As a show of confidence for investors, Platinum promised to inject another \$400 million of equity into Securus.

The corporation’s debt value improved after the announcement, but investor excitement fizzled after Securus failed to secure a refinancing deal even with the sweetener. Banks and lenders, it turned out, were not eager to jump on a toxic prison industry asset that had become the focus of so much negative attention and pressure.

With the clock ticking on Securus’ debt, Worth Rises reached out to credit rating agencies to share information about the state of the prison telecom industry, including the legislative, regulatory, and contract pressures it increasingly faced. In October, S&P Global downgraded Aventiv, Securus’ parent company, to a CCC- credit rating with a negative outlook—a highly speculative, junk bond grade. Analysts explained that the growth of legislation making jail and prison calls free threatened the corporation’s model because “profits could shrink if [Securus] is forced to negotiate with entities that have more negotiating leverage.”

In November, credit rating agency Moody’s followed suit, downgrading Aventiv to “junk” status. Analysts noted that neither the corporation’s cost-savings efforts—including the firing of nearly 300 employees—nor its revenue expansion efforts had meaningfully changed this outlook.

With less than a year before the first tranche of loans came due, Securus made a last-ditch effort to avoid bankruptcy. The corporation coerced its creditors into a distressed debt exchange to delay its maturity dates and interest payments. The distressed deal gave Securus some immediate relief from its debt obligations but cost Platinum Equity \$20 million and sparked last week’s credit ratings downgrade to default. Today, the company’s debt is trading as low as 8 cents on the dollar.

What Comes Next

As financial institutions have soured on Securus, their reasoning has reaffirmed an argument advocates have been making for years.

The success of the prison telecom industry depends entirely on investors, who only recently began to question the ethics of the business, and government complicity from local jails all the way up to Congress. When correctional agencies—rather than incarcerated people and their families—are required to cover

costs associated with these services, this predatory scheme collapses, as states finally have an incentive to demand lower prices from their prison telecom vendors.

And telecom services don't need to be made entirely free to destabilize the industry's business model. Any movement to lower exorbitant rates can threaten the bottom line of corporations that have built an empire around price-gouging the incarcerated. In the wake of recent reforms, phone revenues have declined sharply, while sales of new products like digital tablets have not made up the difference.

All of this spells bad news for cash-strapped Securus and similarly debt-burdened ViaPath. For years, ViaPath's owner, American Securities, has followed the same playbook as Platinum Equity, including trying and failing to offload ViaPath in a SPAC deal. When it comes time to refinance the company's debt next year, investors will be even less likely to take a risk on ViaPath if Securus fails to repay its debts later this year.

While much remains uncertain about how Securus or other prison telecom providers will manage the hard road ahead, the destabilization of this industry could have implications for the hundreds of thousands of incarcerated people who are forced to rely on these companies to communicate with the outside world.

Advocates note that even if a major provider like Securus were to declare bankruptcy, this would not necessarily lead to a disruption in prison telecom services. Bankruptcy alone would not fully put these corporations out of business, at least not immediately.

Instead, they hope Securus' downfall would spur a broader reckoning that right-sizes the industry, stopping the growth of prison telecom corporations, reducing their profit margins, and driving private equity and other financiers out. Even modest changes could break the industry's current stranglehold on prisons and jails, opening the field up to creative new solutions like in-house telecom services or nonprofit providers that can offer the same service at a fraction of the cost. All of this bodes well for future efforts to make prison and jail communication free nationwide.

Through a yearslong campaign of strategic actions, Worth Rises and its partners have brought the largest correctional telecom operator to the brink of insolvency while exposing the industry's underlying vulnerability. Many of the corporations that have profited off this predatory business model are private equity-owned, debt-laden, and facing serious financial challenges. Advocates argue that the same tactics that brought Securus down—narrative change, policy campaigns, regulatory efforts, and investor activism—offer a roadmap for tackling exploitative corporate profiteers across the prison industry.

After decades of exerting nearly unfettered power and influence over carceral policies and practices, the prison industry racket could finally be coming to an end.

"Powerful prison profiteers are upholding mass incarceration so they can take home billions every year, but they are not unstoppable," said Tylek of Worth Rises. "This is a warning to all those with no scruples about how they make their money: hands off our communities."

6 Apr - Illustrated Guide Version 17.3.1 Uploaded!

nycabc.wordpress.com/2024/04/06/guide_17_3

MORE:

We've finished the latest version of the NYC ABC "Illustrated Guide to Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War" and it's available for viewing (and download) by visiting the link at the top of this post. This update includes updated mini-bios, photos, and address changes for several prisoners.

7 Apr - Sindre Has Received Letters

Sweden: After initially not getting any mail inside prison, we are happy to hear that Sindre now has received letters.

MORE:

via *UNOFFENSIVE ANIMAL*

Through his support group, Sindre expresses gratitude to all people who writes to him. Sindre feels a little better. He has recently been moved to another department within compulsory forensic psychiatry.

Sindre is an animal rights activist who, in October 2023, was sentenced to forensic psychiatric forced care, without end date, for actions against a former fur farmer.

10 Apr - One arrest in connection with explosive device outside Alabama AG's office

This is a developing story, so we are redacting the individual's identifiers and this story should be read with a critical eye, as it comes from corporate media.

MORE:

via *Associated Press*

Federal authorities have arrested [someone] they said placed a homemade explosive device — made with nails and firecrackers — outside the Alabama attorney general's office in February.

[REDACTED] was arrested Wednesday on charges of malicious use of an explosive and possession of an unregistered destructive device, the U.S. attorney's office said.

Authorities said a device was detonated in downtown Montgomery outside the Alabama attorney general's office in the early morning hours of Feb. 24. No injuries or significant damage to nearby buildings was reported. The device exploded about 3:42 a.m. on a Saturday.

The device was made with fireworks, nails, metal screws and material soaked in a gasoline or lighter fluid substance, and it was hidden inside a coffee container, prosecutors wrote in a court document.

Federal prosecutors wrote in a court filing, asking for [REDACTED] to be kept in custody, that [REDACTED] had posted a Dec. 12 video on social media expressing frustration with government. Prosecutors said they also believe [REDACTED] placed stickers, including some with the phrase "Support your local antifa," on state government buildings on the same night.

Available court records indicated that [REDACTED] will be represented by a court-appointed federal defender, but did not name a specific attorney.

"Thanks to the work of the FBI and our state and local law enforcement partners, this defendant is being held accountable for allegedly detonating an explosive device outside of the Alabama Attorney General's Office," Attorney General Merrick B. Garland said in a statement. "The Justice Department has no tolerance for acts of violence targeting those who serve the public."

[REDACTED] had an initial appearance on Wednesday afternoon in federal court in Montgomery. U.S. Magistrate Judge Chad W. Bryan ordered that [REDACTED] be held in custody until further proceedings.

"My staff and I are breathing a collective sigh of relief this morning knowing that this individual has been taken off the streets," Marshall said. "Although more information will be provided in the weeks to come, I think it is safe to say that this was not a random act of violence."

Federal prosecutors wrote that a security guard with the nearby Southern Poverty Law Center called 911 to report that an explosion occurred downtown early Saturday morning on Feb. 24. A dispatched police officer could not see any immediate physical evidence. Staff at the attorney general's office found the "remnants of a possible explosive device" when they arrived at work that Monday, prosecutors said.

10 Apr - This Supreme Court Case on Homelessness May Limit Prisoner Rights and Expand Executions

In Grants Pass v. Johnson, a town in Oregon asks the court to reconsider what constitutes “cruel and unusual punishments.”

MORE:

by Maurice Chammah, Shannon Heffernan and Beth Schwartzapel (*The Marshall Project*)

When the Supreme Court hears the case of *Grants Pass v. Johnson* later this month, the justices will consider how far cities can go in policing homeless people. But just as the court swept away a half-century of precedent by overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the justices could use this case about homelessness to upend how we interpret four key words in the Bill of Rights — “cruel and unusual punishments.” Their decision could have ramifications across a wide swath of the criminal justice system, including prison conditions and the death penalty.

The case is about whether the city of Grants Pass, Oregon, violates the Constitution’s Eighth Amendment when it arrests, fines and even jails people without homes for sleeping outside. A lower federal court recently ruled that punishing people for doing something they cannot help is cruel and unusual punishment. “As long as there is no option of sleeping indoors, the government cannot criminalize indigent, homeless people for sleeping outdoors, on public property, on the false premise they had a choice in the matter,” the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals wrote.

Grants Pass appealed the ruling up to the Supreme Court, which will hear oral arguments on April 22, positing that the courts have no business telling cities what behavior they can regulate. The Eighth Amendment, they say, applies to punishments levied after a crime, not laws that establish what is a crime in the first place, and besides, fines and jail time are hardly cruel or unusual.

At the heart of this debate are two very different ways of reading the Eighth Amendment.

First, there’s originalism. In recent sweeping decisions on abortion and guns, conservative justices have focused on what the Constitution’s language meant to the men who wrote it in the 1780s.

But other judges and scholars argue for a “living” Constitution, whose meaning should change as the world changes.

The Eighth Amendment barred “cruel and unusual punishments” at a time when the phrase referred to drawing and quartering or public dissection. More than a century and a half later, in 1958, the Supreme Court took the case of *Albert Trop*, who had been convicted of deserting the military while serving in Morocco during World War II — and was punished with the loss of his citizenship. The court ruled that the punishment was “cruel and unusual” and declared that the amendment “must draw its meaning from the evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society.”

Since then, the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment has become the bedrock upon which a generation of civil rights protections for prisoners and criminal defendants are built — few of which would have been recognizable to George Washington and Alexander Hamilton.

Using the evolving standards argument, federal courts have ruled on access to health care in prison, protection from excessive force and limits on the use of solitary confinement. They have prohibited the death penalty and mandatory life-without-parole sentences for people who are younger than 18 when they commit crimes, as well as executions of people with intellectual disabilities. The language has also served as the basis for decades of decisions requiring that juries consider people’s individual, often trauma-filled lives before deciding whether to send them to death row.

In the *Grants Pass* case, the Supreme Court could sweep away decades of decisions that limit how far states can go in punishing people who are politically unpopular in ways that past justices have said are unacceptable. In 2008, for example, the Supreme Court barred executions of people who sexually assault children, citing evolving standards. Now Florida has enacted just such a law, while Tennessee and Missouri are considering them — inviting the court to reverse course. Gov. Ron DeSantis’ office said at the time that he was “prepared to take this law all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court to overrule judicial precedents which have unjustly shielded child rapists from the death penalty and denied victims and their loved ones the opportunity to pursue ultimate justice against these most heinous criminals.”

More than 100 scholars and organizations have filed “friend of the court” briefs ahead of oral arguments in *Grants Pass v. Johnson*. Many argue the court should let these rulings stand and continue to look to contemporary standards when deciding what is cruel and unusual. In one brief on the other side, Republican attorneys general from 20 states urged the justices to throw out the evolving standards interpretation entirely. (Many of them also made similar arguments in a separate case, supporting Alabama’s request to execute a man with an intellectual disability.) Among their reasons are that it “has no discernible end point” and that it requires “judges to act as sociologists.”

The attorneys general argue that the evolving standards approach has paved the way for courts to get involved in too many subjects, including prisoners’ abilities to pursue gender-affirming surgery or people’s right to vote after they leave prison.

What would originalists like to see instead? At the extreme, an originalist could say the court should go back to debating the punishments of the 1700s, like whipping posts and guillotines.

John Stinneford, a law professor at the University of Florida who studies the original meaning of the Eighth Amendment, said that originalism need not be so limited, because in the 1700s the word “unusual” referred to punishments that were out of line with “long standing practice.” That interpretation, he said, could still allow for courts to rule against things like solitary, which has gone in and out of use over history.

“If you’re trying to figure out whether a given punishment is cruel and unusual, you have to ask how it compares to prior practice concerning punishment,” said Stinneford, who also wrote a brief in support of the town of Grants Pass. “If it’s much harsher than we’ve done, then it can be called cruel and unusual.”

The court could choose a very narrow path in *Grants Pass*, ruling only on the city’s public camping ban and avoiding the broader issues here. It could still be an important ruling, given how many places across the United States are struggling with how to manage rising populations of unhoused people. Cities from San Francisco to Phoenix and beyond have raised controversy by clearing encampments and relying on law enforcement to manage homelessness, even as rents soar and shelter beds are limited.

But if the court issues a more sweeping ruling and abandons the evolving standards yardstick in *Grants Pass*, “that would eviscerate much protection for incarcerated people,” said Sharon Dolovich, a UCLA law professor who studies prison law and policy. “The central protection for the worst forms of prison conditions — the grossly inadequate medical care, the grossly inadequate mental health care, the excessive force, failure to protect from sexual or physical violence from other prisoners, all kinds of the worst pathologies of prison — are all governed by the Eighth Amendment,” she said.

Legal scholars say that the Supreme Court had been slowly moving away from talk of evolving standards in recent years, even before former President Donald Trump’s appointees began shifting the court to the right.

“The court is much more bold and wants to make a statement about originalism,” said Meghan J. Ryan, a Southern Methodist University law professor who published an article last year called “The Death of the Evolving Standards of Decency.” She pointed out that many originalists see the Eighth Amendment as the last vestige of the “living constitutionalism” they’ve been fighting for decades.

The court will likely issue an opinion in the *Grants Pass* case this summer. Even if the justices choose to rule narrowly on the issue of policing and homelessness, conservative lawyers are sure to look for more ways to end the era of “evolving standards of decency.”

“It now seems to be on the right-wing wishlist,” said Carol Steiker, a Harvard Law School professor who studies capital punishment, pointing to the impassioned opinion issued by Justice Antonin Scalia in 2015, the year before his death. In the case of *Glossip v. Gross*, the court upheld Oklahoma’s lethal injection protocol, and Scalia blasted the evolving standards approach as having “caused more mischief to our jurisprudence, to our federal system, and to our society than any other that comes to mind.”

11 Apr - Hridindu Roychowdhury Sentenced to 7½ Years

A Wisconsin man has been sentenced to 7½ years in prison after accepting a non-cooperating plea agreement for firebombing the office of an anti-abortion group two years ago. Again, please read with a critical eye.

MORE:

via *The Associated Press*

Hridindu Roychowdhury, 29, of Madison, also will serve three years on supervised release under the sentence handed down by U.S. District Judge William Conley and was ordered to pay nearly \$32,000 in restitution.

Roychowdhury admitted to throwing two Molotov cocktails through the window of the Madison office of Wisconsin Family Action on May 8, 2022, less than a week after the leak of a draft opinion suggesting the U.S. Supreme Court’s intention to overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion.

One of the firebombs failed to ignite, and the other set a bookcase on fire. Roychowdhury also acknowledged spray-painting the message “If abortions aren’t safe then you aren’t either” on the outside of the building. No one was in the office at the time.

Conley said Roychowdhury “engaged in a deliberate act of terrorism toward a group advocating a different view” from his own and had a “deep hate and anger that in his mind justified firebombing a building.”

A telephone message seeking comment was left early Wednesday evening with Roychowdhury’s federal public defender.

Investigators connected Roychowdhury to the firebombing after police assigned to the state Capitol in Madison reviewed surveillance video of a protest against police brutality. It showed several people spray-painting graffiti on Capitol grounds that resembled the message left on the Wisconsin Family Action office. The images also showed two people leaving the area in a pickup that investigators tracked to Roychowdhury’s home in Madison.

Police began following Roychowdhury, and in March they extracted his DNA from a half-eaten burrito he threw away at a parking lot. That matched a sample taken at the scene of the firebombing.

Police arrested Roychowdhury on March 28, 2023, at a Boston airport where he had booked a one-way ticket to Guatemala City, federal prosecutors have said.

Roychowdhury signed a [non-cooperating -ed.] plea deal with prosecutors agreeing to a federal charge of damaging property with explosives.