



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for December 24th

9 Dec - Update from the Casey Goonan Support Committee

Thanks again to all of you in Casey's extended support network! On every phone call we have with Casey they send their love to all! We have a few updates for you.

MORE:

Big legal news

On Tuesday, Dec. 3, Casey's lawyers and the prosecuting US Attorney filed a joint status report stating that they had reached a plea deal agreement. Casey will plead guilty on the one charge of "damaging property used in or affecting interstate commerce by fire" (18 U.S.C. § 844(f)) and the other two charges will be dropped.

Some important points concerning this agreement and plea deals in general:

- This is preliminary. Discussions are still in progress between defense and prosecution regarding the details. Correspondingly, after the joint filing, last week's court date to hear status reports was rescheduled to Jan. 14 when we imagine we will be provided more information.
- This is a "non-cooperation" plea deal. No information or testimony is being offered against anyone else.
- Once the plea deal is finalized, it will still need to be accepted by the judge.
- No information is available yet on possible sentencing. By statute the minimum sentence is 5 years and the maximum is 20.

We of course will forward shareable details from the legal defense team as they become available.

Health is a struggle inside

Casey maintaining their blood sugars and well-being inside continues to be a struggle and that has recently entailed stretches in the jail infirmary unit. Jail food and conditions are horrible across the board for everyone, but to be a diabetic trying to maintain one's body and mind inside is especially hard. The special diabetic supplemental food packages from vendors are now flowing regularly and helping a lot! Thanks to all who contributed to the fund.

To donate to the food support fund and keep the packages flowing, Venmo [**@juliepetersonG**](#)

Writing Casey letters matters so much!

The mailroom at Santa Rita Jail seems to work in spurts though, no mail for a week then a big ol' batch comes through to Casey. So, in addition to the ups and downs of jail life, the mail service being wildly uneven contributes to the time lag of you getting a response from C. But Casey values every piece! News from the outside is still very important to them – imagine being locked up with only the mainstream tv news being your lifeline. WTF.

Remember if you send zines and newsletters, no staples!

Keep those support events poppin!

Fundraisers, letter writing events and shout outs across the country keep rolling! Much love to all those making them happen. Hit up our insta or email box if you want collaboration or promotion. (Or even guidance on how to organize a support event if you haven't done it before.)

We got a lot of funds to raise to cover the costs of legal defense

A concerted fundraising push is in the works and we will be contacting people directly with asks on spreading the pitch and soliciting donors. To contribute right now, hit us on Chuffed: chuffed.org/project/SupportCasey

9 Dec - Leonard Peltier Updates

On December 4, 2024, Senator Brian Schatz (D-Hawai‘i), Chair of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, took the Congressional floor to advocate for President Biden to grant Leonard Peltier clemency.

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Senator Schatz has been a staunch advocate for Mr. Peltier since 2022. Senator Schatz had many things to say on behalf of Leonard Peltier. The most compelling words spoken were "He's done his time...And he poses little threat to society. If there ever was a case that merited compassionate release, Leonard Peltier's is it. This is exactly what that awesome power is for. To Right a historic wrong."

Despite countless calls for justice and the recognition of Leonard Peltier's unjust incarceration, the Biden administration has remained silent on the issue of clemency for Leonard Peltier. Biden's own party has pleaded with him to show compassion. The Democratic National Committee voted unanimously in 2022 to pass a resolution urging the president to release Peltier. Dozens of senators and members of Congress, including Biden's former presidential rival Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Senate Indian Affairs Committee chairman Brian Schatz (D-Hawai‘i), have called on the president at least four times to free Peltier. One letter states that the case "defies the promises of justice, and the power to exercise mercy in this case lies solely within [Biden's] discretion."

Clemency is appropriate when the rule of law and "normal" channels of the legal system have failed, and there is no other legal recourse. Leonard Peltier's continued incarceration is a glaring blemish on the United States' human rights record and an open wound for Indian Country and Indigenous Peoples around the world. President Biden is likely Leonard Peltier's last chance at freedom, and the time for justice and compassion is now. We join countless advocates, human rights organizations, and Tribal Nations in calling on the White House to act immediately and secure Leonard Peltier's release. Biden has the sole power to grant clemency and free Leonard Peltier.

The Water Protector Legal Collective (WPLC) has long been a committed advocate for the freedom of Leonard Peltier, working alongside Indigenous and human rights organizations worldwide to demand justice for this elder who has been unjustly incarcerated for over 48 years.

In 2022, WPLC joined the American Indian Movement Grand Governing Council (AIMGGC) during their "Leonard Peltier's Walk to Justice," a prayerful, 1,100-mile journey from Minneapolis to Washington, D.C., advocating for Leonard's clemency. This walk highlighted Leonard's case and brought national attention to the injustice he continues to face. Former U.S. Attorney James Reynolds, who supervised Leonard's prosecution in the 1975 killings of two FBI agents on the Pine Ridge Reservation, was present and publicly called for Leonard's clemency, acknowledging that the prosecution and continued incarceration of Leonard were unjust. He has stated that the government "cannot prove that he committed any offense" and that Leonard's conviction was a product of racial bias and prejudice prevalent at the time.

In 2023, as counsel for Mr. Peltier in international efforts, WPLC submitted a comprehensive report to the U.N., urging the U.S. to release Leonard Peltier in accordance with the 2022 U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention's decision (A/HRC/WGAD/2022/7). WPLC's report emphasized several critical recommendations for the U.S. government, including Leonard's immediate release, an end to the use of private military security companies against Water Protectors, the safeguarding of Indigenous rights as set out in the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the creation of a mechanism to address treaty violations independent of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In Geneva during the 2023 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) review, as part of the Indigenous Working Group, WPLC coordinated a Joint Statement calling for Leonard's immediate release. This effort was supported by numerous NGOs and human rights advocates at the United Nations (U.N.), further amplifying the call for justice on an international stage.

This international work resulted in the issue being highlighted during the U.S. review of its compliance with the ICCPR. On October 17, 2023, Vice Chair of the U.N. Human Rights Committee, Dr. Changrok Soh, specifically referenced Leonard's case during the U.S. delegation's review. Dr. Soh raised concerns about the disproportionate impact of life sentences, particularly for Indigenous political prisoners, asking the U.S. delegation, "Can the State party describe what it is doing regarding life sentences for political prisoners, in particular, the case of Indigenous political prisoner Leonard Peltier, who is now—at 79 years old—the longest serving U.S. political prisoner and has served 48 years in prison?" The U.S. delegation offered no response to this urgent question.

Leonard Peltier is now 80 years old, having spent more of his life in prison than as a free man. An extraordinary amount of his incarceration has been spent in solitary confinement, confined to a small, windowless cell that he has described as a "cement steel hotbox." Leonard has been repeatedly denied parole despite widespread legal and human rights experts condemning the irregularities in his case, including fabricated evidence, witness manipulation, FBI interference, and violations of international law.

In June 2024, Leonard Peltier faced a crucial parole hearing, marking another last opportunity for the Parole Commission to correct a historical wrong. Leonard has been eligible for parole since 1986 but has never been granted a release date. WPLC submitted an expert letter to the Parole Commission in support of Leonard's release, detailing the legal irregularities and violations of constitutional due process throughout Leonard's nearly five decades of incarceration. These included Leonard's extradition in violation of international treaties, fabricated evidence, witness manipulation, FBI interference, and the denial of the right to invoke affirmative defenses. The letter also called attention to the procedural deficiencies in Leonard's parole hearings, which were documented by the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in 2022.

The expert letter also called for the parole board to take into account the broader historical context of Leonard's case. As a pivotal figure in the American Indian Movement (AIM), Leonard's advocacy for Indigenous rights and his involvement in efforts to address land rights, cultural preservation, and social justice is a testament to his historical significance. Leonard's case is deeply tied to the systemic injustices faced by Indigenous Peoples, including the murders and disappearances of over 60 Indigenous individuals at the hands of FBI authorities during the 1973 AIM occupation of Pine Ridge.

Support for Leonard's release from countless organizations, Tribal leaders, human rights activists, and members of Congress underscored the broad consensus in the need for justice - yet his parole was denied in July 2024, as was his later appeal.

The average time served by individuals in similarly-situated cases with life sentences before they were released on parole was 8.8 years in 1985 and 27.4 years in 2015. Instead, Mr. Peltier has been incarcerated nearly half a century—5 times the length of a prison sentence normally served by those given a life sentence.

There has been a disturbing silence from the U.S. government, including the Biden administration, regarding efforts to protect Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities from "death by incarceration" or to address calls for justice and release for Leonard Peltier. WPLC, alongside other civil society organizations, continues to call on the U.S. government to definitively recognize and right the historical wrongs that have led to Leonard's wrongful imprisonment.

Leonard Peltier's continued imprisonment remains a deep injustice, especially for Indigenous Peoples worldwide. His case is a glaring example of the failure of the U.S. legal system to deliver justice for Indigenous peoples, and his freedom is an urgent call for action.

As Natali Segovia, WPLC Executive Director and Senior Attorney, has stated: "The injustice Mr. Peltier has been subjected to since day one of his incarceration must end. The international human rights community recognizes Mr. Peltier's continued imprisonment as an ongoing injustice. While this is not new, there is an urgency and momentum now that we must keep alive."

As we continue to fight for Leonard's release, we do so with the understanding that his freedom is not just his alone to claim—it belongs to all Indigenous Peoples who have faced, and continue to face, systemic injustice. WPLC will continue to support Leonard Peltier until he is free, because the time for his freedom and justice is now.

We call on President Biden to act immediately: to grant Leonard Peltier clemency, to address the historical wrongs surrounding his case, and to make a formal commitment to ending life sentences that amount to "death by incarceration" for Black, Brown, and Indigenous Peoples. The fight for Leonard's freedom is not just his struggle—it is a struggle for justice that reverberates through generations.

What keeps Leonard alive is his indomitable spirit and his hope that justice is yet to come. It is a glimmer of a hope but as all fire-keepers know, an ember is all you need to fan into a flame.

WPLC remains committed to Leonard Peltier's freedom, and we will continue this fight until justice prevails.

December 13th - 34 Members of Congress Urge President Biden to Pardon Leonard Peltier

by Staff (*Native News Online*)

U.S. House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ) and U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Chairman Brian Schatz (D-HI) spearheaded a letter urging President Biden to grant clemency to Leonard Peltier, the renowned Native American rights activist. The letter was dated Thursday, December 12, 2024, the same day the president commuted sentences of 1,500 individuals and pardoned 39, a record by a president in a single day.

The letter, signed by 34 Members of Congress, was sent during the final weeks of Biden's term, calling for a pardon for Peltier, who has been incarcerated since 1977 following a controversial trial and conviction for the murder of two FBI agents during a standoff on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

The lawmakers highlighted the long-standing legal and moral concerns surrounding Peltier's conviction, citing the case's flaws, including what many view as an unjust investigation and trial. The U.S. Attorney who prosecuted the case has also called the trial problematic. In their appeal, the Members of Congress emphasized Peltier's advanced age and declining health, making the argument that a presidential pardon is his last chance for freedom. The case of Leonard Peltier remains a focal point of discussions about justice, Native American rights, and the U.S. legal system, with many advocates urging for his release on the grounds of humanitarian and legal concerns.

"Despite the grave concerns surrounding the continued imprisonment of Mr. Peltier, who is now 80 years old and suffering from severe health conditions, including increasing vision loss, the Bureau of Prisons denied Mr. Peltier a compassionate release or reduction in sentence in April of this year; and in July 2024, the U.S. Parole Commission denied him parole. These recent denials mean only you have the unique ability to grant him clemency and rectify this grave injustice that has long troubled human rights advocates and Native Peoples across the globe," the lawmakers wrote.

The lawmakers highlight the Biden-Harris administration's unprecedented record of addressing the country's history of injustices against Indigenous communities and urge President Biden to cement this legacy by commuting Mr. Peltier's sentence.

December 20th - Support Leonard Peltier Update

THANK YOU for your efforts with the Senate Judiciary Committee. Leonard has been allowed out briefly for the last few days. It could be coincidental, but it could be because of pressure on the Judiciary. It would not hurt to thank the Judiciary for stepping down the lockdowns at Coleman 1. No one throws a fit when someone does something right, and they may be responsible for the men being allowed out of their cells a few hours a day. There will be a link at the end of this email with Judiciary contacts.

Leonard wanted me to tell everyone he has received a few letters and is grateful, but he cannot read them. He is having severe trouble with his vision. Please use LARGE, BOLD font. Letters mean a lot in solitary confinement. A message of solidarity, or a joke. Leonard likes to laugh.

12 Dec - 'Sleep Don't Come': The Dangerous Problem of Sleep Deprivation

Moldy mattresses, 24/7 lights and constant noise contribute to a persistent health and safety crisis in prisons and jails.

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by Shannon Heffernan and Keri Blakinger (*The Marshall Project*)

Steven Backstrom was struggling to stay awake during his shift in the prison shoe factory. The machines could be dangerous if you weren't paying attention, and he'd only slept about 3 ½ hours.

Activity at the Clements Unit, a state prison in Amarillo, Texas, was always churning. Night after night, doors slammed and people yelled. Sometimes, staff delivered medications at 2 a.m. Many nights officers forced him to come to the front of his cell for a security check. The sleepless nights made him feel like scum had settled over his brain.

But he didn't have the choice to skip work. The job didn't pay, and if he didn't show up, he could be punished.

That morning, he pushed the wrong button on a machine, and the equipment, meant to mold the shape of the shoe, clamped down on Backstrom's right hand instead. The pain was excruciating. When he lifted his hand, his fingers were so badly mangled, he thought it looked like they were wobbling in the air. Backstrom later described the injuries in a handwritten grievance he sent to prison officials in 2011: stitches and metal pins in his pinky and ring finger.

Backstrom sued the prison system over the accident the following year, blaming the injury on sleep deprivation, but a federal judge dismissed the suit. More than a decade later, Backstrom still cannot close his hand. He still can't get a decent night's sleep because relentless interruptions and noise remain a part of the nightly routine at the Clements Unit where he remains incarcerated.

The Marshall Project and *Los Angeles Times* have identified more than 30 lawsuits regarding sleep deprivation behind bars over the last three decades — including one that ended in a settlement requiring changes at a San Francisco jail three years ago. More than two dozen interviews with incarcerated people, guards and oversight officials from Georgia to Texas to California show that extreme lack of sleep continues to be a problem in prisons and jails.

Sleep may seem like a trivial issue, one of comfort. But lack of sleep can cause serious mental and physical ailments and even lead to early death. Both U.S. and international courts have recognized sleep deprivation as cruel and unusual punishment.

Poor sleep can also cause broader institutional problems; a community where no one is adequately rested may be more likely to have conflicts and fights. Sharon Dolovich, a professor at the UCLA School of Law, has been researching sleep deprivation in prisons and jails for a forthcoming academic paper and said she was surprised at the paucity of studies on the topic, considering that it affects almost every aspect of the corrections system, from security to mental and physical health.

“It is a deep and pervasive and serious problem,” Dolovich said. “And the attention that is being paid to it ... across the board is so minuscule compared to the scale of the problem.”

The reasons people can’t sleep behind bars can vary widely. Sometimes, the prisons are too cold in the winter or too hot in the summer. Sometimes, the lights never go off, or there aren’t any mattresses, or the facilities are just too loud.

In Los Angeles, jail officials have a long history of failing to provide the men and women in their care with bedding, sheets or a place to sleep. In the 1970s, after several people incarcerated in the downtown jails filed a class action lawsuit over poor conditions there, a federal judge ordered the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department to provide better sleeping conditions. But the department failed to consistently do so, and more than three decades later another judge found officials guilty of “deliberate indifference” for failing to provide bunks.

“Quite simply, that a custom of leaving inmates nowhere to sleep but the floor constitutes cruel and unusual punishment is nothing short of self-evident,” U.S. District Judge Dean D. Pregerson wrote in 2007.

Before Pregerson issued his ruling, one man testified that he’d been forced to sleep under another man’s bunk in a five-person cell, where he’d eventually developed a staph infection from the mold and mildew.

“Prisons may not deprive those in their care of a basic place to sleep — a bed,” Pregerson said. “For, like wearing clothing, sleeping in a bed identifies our common humanity.”

This year, when oversight inspectors with the county’s Sybil Brand Commission visited Men’s Central Jail, they noticed some of the mattresses were moldy. After they visited the Twin Towers Correctional Facility across the street, they laid out their concerns in a lengthy report.

“Most people in the areas we visited do not have sheets or pillows,” they wrote. “A couple of people reported they were cold because they did not have enough blankets to cover themselves.”

A few months later, commissioners returned to Men’s Central Jail and noted that many of the mattresses “were ripped or had chunks of the mattress missing,” and the men incarcerated there couldn’t formally complain because there were no grievance forms or pencils to fill them out.

In an emailed statement this month, the sheriff’s department said it gives out mattresses that are “clean and intact” but that they are sometimes “intentionally damaged” by people using them.

The department also said that “a lot” of reforms have taken place since 2007 and that the jails “have not had floor sleepers due to a lack of housing in many years.” In response to a follow-up question the department said that now when people are forced to sleep on the floor it is due to processing delays and not overcrowding.

However, an October oversight report contradicted that point, noting that people held at the county’s largest jail still report they are sometimes forced to sleep on floors due to lack of space.

In some jails and prisons, guards check on each prisoner once — or several times — per hour, clanging cellblock doors and shining lights in everyone’s faces to make sure they haven’t escaped and are still alive. A man in prison in Georgia, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation, said his unit has “huge

lights” and frequent middle-of-the-night emergency counts at 3 or 4 a.m. “I wear earplugs and skip breakfast,” he said.

But in many facilities, it’s not just the doors and the lights. In 2013, Michael Garrett sued Texas prisons, alleging that meal, work, headcount and medication times started so early in the morning it was impossible to get more than 2 ½ hours of uninterrupted sleep. The state nearly succeeded in fending off the case, but this year, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sided with Garrett, saying his suit should move ahead. The case is still pending.

This year, Steven Baughman, who is incarcerated in a different Texas prison, told *The Times* and *The Marshall Project* that he usually gets up just after 2 a.m. to make it to the medical wing for his 3 a.m. insulin shot. Then he goes to the chow hall for breakfast, and goes about his day, which he said doesn’t end until the last count around 11 p.m.

An employee at another unit described a similar schedule there. The employee asked to remain anonymous because they were not authorized to speak on the record and feared retaliation. They provided records this year showing that the unit’s last standing count takes place just before midnight, and prisoners working the first shift start their day at 2 a.m. Breakfast is served two hours later.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice refused to release daily schedules for other units in response to a records request, but officials said they adjusted schedules statewide in 2022 to cut the number of daily prisoner counts from eight to six.

“This reduction increased operational efficiencies, improved staffing challenges and allowed inmates more uninterrupted time,” prison spokeswoman Amanda Hernandez wrote in an email, adding that the prison system also now uses night lights instead of overhead lighting for middle-of-the-night counts.

According to the National Institutes of Health, sleep deprivation is linked to a myriad of problems, including heart disease, diabetes and strokes, as well as mental health issues, such as depression and suicide. And there are unique risks in a carceral setting. According to filings in one lawsuit, people awaiting trial in two different San Francisco County jails were so cognitively impaired from sleep deprivation that they were unable to adequately participate in their defense at court.

Maureen Hanlon, a civil rights attorney with ArchCity Defenders, saw something similar with clients jailed in the St. Louis area. “It shows up in how they’re able to cooperate, how they’re able to understand, how they’re able to rationally think through things,” Hanlon said. She believes sleep deprivation is a hidden contributing factor to people taking bad plea deals.

John Thompson was incarcerated for more than 37 years at prisons in Pennsylvania. He spent some of that time in solitary confinement, where he said the lights were on around the clock. He tried stretching out his socks and wrapping them over his eyes to block out the light, but it wasn’t enough.

“It feels like your body can never rest. Like it’s always daytime. So, when you try to go to sleep, sleep don’t come,” he said.

Thompson remembers watching one of the men in a cell next to him deteriorate after experiencing intense sleep deprivation. When he first arrived, he seemed fine, Thompson said. But after weeks of complaining he couldn’t sleep under the bright lights; the man began describing voices no one else could hear. He grew combative, flooding his cell with water and screaming through the night, which in turn made it difficult for others to sleep.

Thompson was released from prison in 2017 and now works at the Abolitionist Law Center, which files lawsuits over poor conditions behind bars. One of those suits — filed this year — complains of continuing

issues with sleep deprivation due to the constant illumination in solitary confinement cells in Pennsylvania prisons. Pennsylvania officials declined to comment, citing the ongoing litigation.

Because there are many problems that lead to sleep deprivation, fixing it requires many solutions. Prison officials can provide cleaner and better-quality bedding and make sure facilities are not too cold or hot. They can dim lights in the evening and adjust schedules and protocols so people aren't awakened throughout the night for meals, medicine or security checks. They can release people at low risk of reoffending so facilities are less crowded, which could allow beds to be farther apart in dorms and decrease noise.

Around-the-clock checks and 24/7 lighting are ostensibly security measures, but Dolovich is skeptical that such measures actually help prevent suicides or escapes. The time between checks, she reasons, is more than sufficient to attempt suicide, and nighttime escapes from locked facilities are extremely unlikely. The problems created by sleep deprivation can hinder the very things officials say they want. Suicide is correlated with lack of sleep. Dolovich says prison officials are trying to prevent people from being able to kill themselves while not considering the factors that might contribute to why they are suicidal, such as sleeplessness.

"Decisions that are made about how the facilities are going to be run reflect an inability to recognize the humanity of the people inside," she said.

She makes a similar argument about security: Sleep-deprived people are more likely to get in fights, so security measures that make sleep worse can backfire.

A man who was recently incarcerated at Florence State Prison Complex in Arizona said he has observed how poor sleep can lead to violence. He is not named out of concern for his safety.

"It's like a bubble, everything builds up and builds up and builds up. And then if you have enough of those individuals in the same environment, it's eventually gonna pop," he said.

13 Dec - Illustrated Guide Version 17.11 Uploaded!

nycabc.wordpress.com/2024/12/13/guide_17_11

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. Unfortunately, this edition includes the addition of Annarella Rivera, an antifascist from Florida found guilty to vandalizing a fake reproductive rights clinic run by anti-abortion zealots.

17 Dec - Over 100 Survivors of FCI Dublin Reach Settlement with Bureau of Prisons

Survivors, advocates call on BOP to do more to protect incarcerated people, urge Biden to grant clemency, releases, visas

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Over 100 survivors of staff sexual assault and harassment at the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Dublin – a now-shuttered federal women's prison in Northern California – have reached historic settlement agreements with the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). The agreements settle dozens of lawsuits brought by individual survivors against the United States, the BOP, and individual FCI Dublin officials. As a result of the settlements, this group of 103 survivors will receive a total of \$115 million, the largest aggregate settlement in BOP history. The announcement comes shortly after BOP announced the permanent closure of the facility, and agreed to enter into an unprecedented Consent Decree to resolve pending class action litigation about abuse and retaliation at FCI Dublin.

"We were sentenced to prison, we were not sentenced to be assaulted and abused," said Aimee Chavira, a formerly incarcerated survivor who is part of the settlement. "I hope this settlement will help survivors, like me, as they begin to heal – but money will not repair the harm that BOP did to us, or free survivors who continue to suffer in prison, or bring back survivors who were deported and separated from their families. And money will not stop prison officials from continuing to abuse incarcerated people. I am speaking out to demand justice for all survivors of prison abuse, and to show other survivors that we can stand up against this culture of abuse together. Our government can and must take real action to make sure that no one else suffers like we did at FCI Dublin."

The individual lawsuits are part of a coordinated effort led by survivors and the Dublin Prison Solidarity Coalition to bring to light the abuses that took place at FCI Dublin and hold the BOP accountable. Alongside the individual lawsuits included in this historic settlement, a group of survivors and the California Coalition for Women Prisoners brought a class action lawsuit demanding policy changes. Coalition members have also worked to protect non-citizen survivors from deportation, support survivors in filing to request compassionate release, and have called on President Biden to grant clemency petitions for survivors of sexual abuse.

"This is not an FCI Dublin problem – it's a BOP problem," said Emily Shapiro, an advocate with the California Coalition for Women Prisoners and member of the Dublin Prison Solidarity Coalition. "The DOJ [Department of Justice] and the Biden administration know that sexual abuse and retaliation are rampant in federal prisons, but they have failed to enact the structural changes necessary to prevent future abuse. Meanwhile, people who were incarcerated at FCI Dublin continue to suffer staff sexual assault, retaliation, and medical neglect at other BOP prisons across the country. BOP has utterly refused to take responsibility for its many failings – they seem to think that they can temporarily close one prison, write checks, and hope that everyone moves on, but we will not stop demanding justice for survivors of BOP abuse."

18 Dec - Urgent Alert for Jamil al-Amin

Imam Jamil had a recent growth on his face that is potentially life-threatening.

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This is on top of his multiple myeloma (cancer), strokes, other significant medical issues, and feeble old age. At 81 years old, Imam Jamil Al-Amin, formerly known as H. Rap Brown, a civil rights leader who has been wrongfully imprisoned for the past 24 years, needs YOUR IMMEDIATE HELP to stop his "death by medical neglect"!!!

Call USP Tucson and demand that they grant Imam Jamil an emergency medical transfer from United States Penitentiary (USP) Tucson to Federal Medical Center (FMC) Butner for his immediate medical treatment. Email: TCX-ExecAssistant-S@bop.gov | Call: 520.663.5000, Press 0 (ignore the menu) Provide Name & Inmate Number: Jamil Al-Amin, #99974-555

18 Dec - Alex Stokes Stands His Ground In Appeal Bid

While New York City vigilante Daniel Penny was in court trying to convince a jury that his killing of Jordan Neely, a 30-year-old homeless man, was not criminal as it was done in defense of others (a case in which Penny ultimately prevailed), two and a half hours north, the New York State Supreme Court heard arguments Nov. 18 to set aside or outright dismiss the case of Alex Stokes Contompasis, who is currently incarcerated after being convicted for stabbing two Proud Boys at the New York State Capitol on Jan 6, 2021.

MORE:

by Idavox

The difference between the cases is those in the Proud Boys group were physically attacking others and Contompasis didn't kill anyone. Still, Contompasis was sentenced to twenty years even though he was acting in defense of others.

Contompasis was not present at the hearing, but his attorney noted several issues with his trial, most notably that Contompasis was acting in self-defense, was not afforded a speedy trial, and that a juror who was wavering in her impartiality was placed on the jury regardless, something that prompted a number of the justices to express particular concern.

Contompasis' attorney Kathy Manley told the justices that when local Proud Boys chapter leaders Douglas Michael Ruso and James P. Warner were stabbed in a fight after Warner's brother, Proud Boy Dominic Wierzbicki, began tazing those opposed to the "Stop the Steal" rally supporters of Donald Trump organized, Contompasis did so to defend others. "It's clear that Appellant subjectively believed that he needed to do what he did and I would say that the evidence shows objectively under all the circumstances that it was reasonable," Manley said. "Here we have Dominic Wierzbicki, this key witness, (who) tazed a counter protestor who was standing just with his hands in his pockets. At that point everyone said chaos broke out and there was several confrontations." She goes on to note that Ruso grabbed Contompasis by the arm and another person by the neck, prompting the stabbing Ruso suffered. "At that point, Mr. Warner runs after Appellant and starts punching him, knocks him to the ground, breaks his wrist and continues to hit him while he's on the ground."

Manley notes that when Warner was stabbed, it was done in self-defense, however Assistant District Attorney Daniel Young attempted to put a more ominous spin on Contompasis' actions, saying that he was there "targeting his political opponents" to attack and that his lack of remorse justified the 20-year sentence he received. "He believed even at the time of sentencing that he still believed that he was justified in what he did, not just because he was protecting people but because he was protecting them from his political opponents," Young said.

Young however still had to acknowledge that Wierzbicki initiated the melee but downplayed his relevance in the case, despite him providing a witness statement. "The defense puts a lot of stock in the Wierzbicki statement because Wierzbicki essentially kicked off this whole melee but as it pertains to the defendant's justification defense and the charges against the defendant, he's not relevant in the slightest" Young said, noting that the only interaction that Contompasis had during the incident was when he initially slashed at Wierzbicki, causing him to back off. "This isn't a witness that's central to our case, that's not even needed for our case."

Wierzbicki turned himself into police in March 2021 and was charged with third-degree assault and possession of a weapon in the fourth-degree. He ended up just being fined.

Manley countered pointing out that Contompasis not only acted to protect others as even Young noted but also diffused a situation that he saw was going too far.

Manley also noted how "Juror #14" was equivocating when asked during selection whether or not she can be impartial to him. She was initially excused but was ultimately placed on the jury. "One of the prospective jurors gave many equivocal responses," Manley explained. "When asked if there was anything that could affect her ability to be fair, she said, maybe not. And then she said, 'I'm more concerned.' She said, 'I think I can be fair, but it kind of makes me angry. There's more support for criminals than victims.' And finally at the end, she said, 'Okay, I can set it aside, but I'm not happy with it.'" Although she was first set aside, eventually she was put on the jury.

Young denied that Juror #14 was equivocal. "I think a juror saying that they can set aside all biases, but they don't like it, that's the same as saying they can set aside all biases. That doesn't turn it into an equivocal statement." One of the justices disagreed at this point saying, "But she equivocates by saying things like I believe so, I think so."

“She does,” Young said, “she says that she can set the bias aside.” This began a discussion with the one justice noting that the juror’s behavior was “problematic.” Later Young said that he understood if the court was hesitant to condone the juror’s behavior.

Since Contompasis’ conviction, Albany County District Attorney David Soares, whose office prosecuted Contompasis, was defeated in a Democratic primary by criminal defense attorney Lee Kindlon who went on to win the general election and will assume the office at the beginning of 2025. It is not known how Kindlon will go forward with the case.

20 Dec - Parents of Forest Defender Killed by Police File Civil Rights Lawsuit

The parents of slain forest defender Manuel ‘Tortuguita’ Paez Terán filed a civil rights lawsuit Tuesday against three Georgia law enforcement officers they say are most responsible for the death of their child in January 2023.

MORE:

by Sean Summers (*Unicorn Riot*)

Nearly two years after police killed Terán, and a year after the state refused to bring charges against any of the state troopers responsible, Tortuguita’s parents are still seeking answers and accountability for the death of their 26-year-old child.

Belkis Terán and Joel Paez, Tortuguita’s mother and father, are suing Georgia Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Ryan Long as well as Georgia State Patrol troopers Mark Lamb and Bryland Myers in federal court claiming that the raid that led to their child’s killing violated Tortuguita’s civil rights.

“Why did this happen to my child?” Belkis Terán asked at a press conference Tuesday. “Though now we know, it did not just happen to my child... This violence is happening to a community. This destruction is happening to our rights. Our rights to oppose a wrong decision. To stand up for the forest,” Terán added.

The suit claims that Long, who was in part responsible for orchestrating the multi-agency raid against the encampment, ordered troopers under his command to arrest protesters for criminal trespass despite knowing that the encampment was on public land which hadn’t been closed or posted against trespassing.

That order, according to the complaint, led to troopers Lamb and Myers illegally seizing Terán and using excessive force, violating Tortuguita’s Fourth Amendment rights and ultimately killing them.

The family also alleges that the raid itself, which happened on public land separate from the construction site of Cop City, violated Tortuguita’s First Amendment rights to protest the facility’s construction, which is an act of political speech, the lawsuit says.

The family did not name the other state troopers who shot their child – Ronaldo Kegel, Jerry Parrish, Jonathan Salcedo, and Royce Zah – in the lawsuit because they believe they were just as endangered as Tortuguita was by Long’s orders and the other troopers’ actions, attorney Jeff Filipovits said.

The raid came amid a fever pitch of rhetoric demonizing those opposed to Cop City as terrorists. In the lead up to the lethal raid, police began charging activists as domestic terrorists, and falsely claiming that the Department of Homeland Security had classified movement participants as “domestic violent extremists.”

Paez Terán was an active participant in the movement against Cop City, an 85-acre police training campus currently in the final phases of construction near Atlanta. Determined to see the large training facility stopped, they joined an ongoing forest occupation near the construction site in 2022.

On the morning of Jan. 18 2023, heavily armed police from different state and local agencies raided the encampment, arresting protesters and trashing camps. When Georgia State Patrol troopers reached the tent Paez Terán was sleeping in, there was a brief standoff before troopers shot pepper balls into their tent.

Moments later troopers opened fire on Tortugueta, shooting them 14 times and leaving them dead with 57 bullet wounds.

Manuel's family still hasn't gotten clarity on the circumstances surrounding their child's death nearly two years after the fatal shooting.

Lawyers with Spears & Filipovits, the firm representing the family, hope that the civil suit will uncover some of the yet unknown details of the raid that ended in police killing the forest defender.

"The story of Manuel's death is still being written," Attorney Brian Spears said at Tuesday's press conference. "The objective of this lawsuit is to learn the truth about who planned the raid and to hold them responsible."

Despite pleas to elected officials and the GBI, the state has refused to release any details of their investigation to Tortugueta's family.

Calls for an independent investigation into the shooting rose in the immediate aftermath of the killing. While the family was able to secure an independent autopsy, to date there hasn't been an independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding Terán's killing.

The only investigation conducted was carried out by the GBI, the same entity that organized the raid and the same body that oversees the Georgia State Patrol.

21 Dec - Anarchist Found Dead in Pre-Trial Detention Center

Russia: A man in southern Russia's Rostov region was found dead in a pre-trial detention center, the independent news outlet Mediazona reported Friday, citing prison authorities.

MORE:

by Sergei Vedyashkin (*The Moscow Times*)

Roman Shvedov, 39, a self-described anarchist, was sentenced to 16 years in prison earlier this week for setting fire to a district administration building in the Rostov region. His body was found on Wednesday.

According to the Telegram news channel Shot, Shvedov committed suicide. *The Moscow Times* could not independently verify that report.

After his arrest in 2022, Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) accused Shvedov of trying to "destabilize the activities of the authorities, to influence their decision-making," as well as to protest the war in Ukraine and partial mobilization.

Investigators said he broke a window on the first floor of an administrative building and threw a container of gasoline inside before setting it on fire. As a result, the office of the deputy head of the Zimovnikovsky district and the head of one of the departments caught fire.

Authorities estimated the fire damage at 941,000 rubles (\$8,700).

In his correspondence with the human rights organization Zona Solidarnosti, Shvedov refused legal assistance. He said that he "would rot in prison" and that it was impossible to help him, asking instead to help other political prisoners.

22 Dec - Write To A Prisoner During the Holidays

Breaking cages and fighting the crappy society means you can sometimes be forced to spend time behind bars.

MORE:

via *UNOFFENSIVE ANIMAL*

To be in prison can be lonely, especially during the so-called holidays. Let's remember our incarcerated friends and comrades these days. Send a postcard to a prisoner. Let them know they are not forgotten!

If it's your first time writing an inmate, we have a list of prisoners you can send letters to. Check unoffensiveanimal.is for more info.

26 Dec - Honor José Hamza Saldana at the Kwanzaa Film Festival

WHAT: Award Ceremony

WHEN: 6:00pm, Thursday, December 26th

WHERE: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 515 Malcolm X Boulevard, Manhattan

COST: \$50

MORE:

To mark the first day of Kwanzaa, we are delighted to announce that former political prisoner José Hamza Saldana, a tireless advocate for prison reform and the Director of Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP), will be honored for his exceptional dedication and service during the Kwanzaa Film Festival Award Ceremony.

31 Dec - BK/NY – NYE – Noise Demo Against the Prison Industrial Complex, In Solidarity with PPs and POWs

WHAT: Noise Demo

WHEN: 9:00pm, Tuesday, December 31st

WHERE: Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC, the federal prison in Brooklyn); 29th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues, Brooklyn, New York 11232 (D/N/R to 36th Street or R to 25th Street).

BRING: Noisemakers, air horns, drums, anything that is loud!

MORE:

On the noisiest night of the year in New York City, come help us remind folks locked up that they are not alone. NYC Anarchist Black Cross, in response to an international call for noise demonstrations outside of prisons, is asking folks to join us outside of the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Come, not to appeal to authority, speak truth to power, or any other contrivance, but rather to stand with comrades, at a safe distance, and show direct solidarity to those on the other side of the wall.

The state, writ large, is targeting anarchists all across the United States and abroad. This will be both protest and celebration.

3 Jan - We Go Where They Go

WHAT: Book Reading and Discussion

WHEN: 7:00pm, Friday, January 3rd

WHERE: The Word Is Change - 368 Tompkins Avenue, Brooklyn

COST: FREE

MORE:

When Dare To Struggle NYC read *We Go Where They Go: The Story of Anti-Racist Action* as part of their radical book club they knew they wanted to go deeper into its lessons and how to apply them on our current terrain. So, they invited several of the contributors to the book to share their observations. Please join Michael Staudenmaier and Kristin Schwartz for a great way to kick off the year.