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Updates for October 31st

17 Oct - Ruchell Cinque Magee Joins the Ancestors

Ruchell Cinque Magee joined the ancestors on October 16th, having recently being released after 67 years of being caged!

MORE:

Ruchell Magee was 84 years old and spent most of his life behind bars. Throughout his sixty-seven years of unjust captivity, Ruchell was one of the first and most consistent prisoners linking mass incarceration and the U.S. prison system to slavery. Ruchell Magee took the name Cinque from the enslaved African Sengbe Pieh who led an 1839 rebellion to commandeer the slave ship La Amistad, arguing that Africans have the right to resist "unlawful" slavery. Ruchell maintained that Black people in the US have the right to resist this new form of slavery which is part of the colonial control of Black people in this country:

"Slavery 400 years ago, slavery today. It's the same but with a new name.

My fight is to expose the entire system, judicial and prison system, a system of slavery...This will cause benefit not just to myself but to all those who at this time are being criminally oppressed or enslaved by this system.

You have to deal on your own tactics. You have a right to take up arms to oppose any usurped government, particularly the type of corruption that we have today." – Ruchell Magee

Ruchell's life commitment, political stance and writings point to the need for a prison abolitionist movement to seriously address the historical legacy of slavery, and slave rebellions in order to truly be in solidarity with the millions of people incarcerated in the US.

17 Oct - News on anarchist political prisoners in Belarus, September 2023

We are going to drop a LOT of updates on international political prisoners and prisoners of war below, starting with a report from Belarus ABC on comrades in that country.

MORE:

31 anarchists and antifascists continue to serve their sentences in Belarusian prisons, one more person is under the limitation of freedom regime at home.

In September we have learned that Dzmitry Rezanovich had spent 35 days in a punishment isolation cell. He is deprived of meetings with relatives and packages. At the end of September, Dzmitry was transferred into a cell-type unit (a unit with severe limitations on movement and restricted possibilities) for 6 months, until March 2024, allegedly because he had broken the rules of the penal institution. It is plausible that he will be transferred from a penal colony into a prison.

Political prisoners (not only anarchists, all political prisoners) in Belarus are almost completely isolated from the outside world. Even close relatives do not receive letters from them for weeks, sometimes for months. In such a situation, every postcard or letter which made its way outside the prison walls makes news. In September, fragments of letters sent by Ihar Alinevich, Dzmitry Dubouski and Mikalai Dziadok have been published (one can consult them at Russian language version of our website). In short, the imprisoned anarchists read books, keep spirit high and take from life everything they can take.

On 24 September 2023, Ihar Alinevich turned 40. Various actions of solidarity took place in several countries. Additionally, a mural dedicated to Ihar appeared in Warsaw near Karma bar (pictured). A historian Aliaksandr Laneuski wrote an open letter, wishing Ihar happy birthday.

October 18th - Restrictions increased for suspects in Scripta Scelera case

Translation via Act for Freedom Now!

We inform you that on October 14th an aggravation of the precautionary measures has been notified concerning two of the anarchist comrades accused in the operation Scripta Scelera of the 8th of August against the internationalist anarchist fortnightly “Bezmotivny.”

Following some reports by the DIGOS relating to alleged violations of restrictions, the judge for preliminary investigations ordered transfer to prison for Gino Vatteroni (who was under house arrest with full restrictions) and aggravation of the precautionary measure for Veronica (originally placed under obligation to remain with night re-entry from 19:00 to 07:00 and is now under house arrest with all restrictions).

We recall that in these proceedings ten anarchist comrades are accused of subversive association with aims of terrorism or subversion of the democratic order (art. 270 bis c. p.) and incitement to commit crime (art. 414 c. p.) with the aggravation of terrorist aims (art. 270 bis 1 c. p.). Following the outcome of the review hearing held on 28 August in the court of Genoa, the precautionary measures for the nine comrades under house arrest with restrictions were only confirmed in reference to art. 414 c. p. aggravated with aims of terrorism (as well as for a minor offence against the honour or prestige of the President of the Republic, art. 278 c. p., for which four of the comrades are under investigation). Further updates to follow.

October 19th - Gino Vatteroni has been transferred

The anarchist comrade Gino Vatteroni has been transferred from the prison of Massa to that of Alessandria, in “Alta Sicurezza 2” [High-security 2], where many anarchist comrades have been imprisoned in the past and where some revolutionary communist militants are currently being held. The comrade finds himself in maximum security as the charge of incitement to commit crime (art. 414 c. p.) has been aggravated with that of ‘terrorist aims’ (art. 270 bis 1 c. p.).

We recall that the comrade – arrested on August 8th – in the operation Scripta Scelera against the internationalist anarchist fortnightly “Bezmotivny” was initially put under house arrest with all restrictions and with electronic bracelet – and later transferred to prison on October 4th due to a worsening of the repressive measures ordered by the GIP following a report by the DIGOS. The same day another comrade, Veronica, also received notification of the aggravation of the precautionary measure from obligation to stay with night return from 7pm to 7am to house arrest with full restrictions (see “Update on operation Scripta Scelera: Gino transferred to prison in Massa, Veronica under house arrest with all restrictions”).

Therefore, following the tightening of the precautionary measures, the situation of the ten comrades for whom the PM Manotti had requested arrest in prison: as well as Gino in prison in Alessandria, another four are under house arrest with all restrictions, three under forced residence with night entry from 7pm to 7am, another under forced residence with night entry from 9pm to 6am. Finally, a tenth comrade is investigated with no restrictions.

With these constant provocations by the DIGOS (recall that during these two months a comrade was put in prison for a few nights while awaiting location of their domicile and another received an aggravation of the measure to house arrest for a month as a warning for an alleged violation of the prescriptions) the political police has finally succeeded – for the first time in recent history – in putting an anarchist comrade in prison, moreover in AS2, on the basis of what is objectively a crime of opinion. This fact is yet another repressive escalation against the press and ideas of revolutionary anarchism in Italy, in continuity with the operation Sibilla and with the transfer of Alfredo Cospito to a regime of 41 bis aimed at striking the contribution that the comrade had continued to give to the movement from behind bars for ten years. Faced with the repressive offensive of the State we will not be intimidated by these real politics of war: we continue with agitation and anarchist propaganda.

October 21st - Anarchist Lev Skoryakin kidnapped in Kyrgyzstan

In night between 16th and 17th of October in Bishkek, according to DOXA, unknown people kidnapped activist of Left Bloc, anarchist Lev Skoryakin. Lawyers do not know about his whereabouts. In Russia, Skoryakin is accused of “hooliganism with weapons,” due to action against a FSB office in the South-West of Moscow with another activist of the Left Bloc Ruslan Abasov. Skoryakin and Abasov were holding banners and burning flares at the office. They were remanded to Butyrka prison of Moscow but released court pending, and they escaped Russia. Skoryakin was arrested in absence in February 2022, and arrest warrant was issued in April of 2022.

In June, Skoryakin was arrested in Kyrgyzstan due to international extradition request by Russia, but in September he was released from remand prison due to decision of general prosecutor of the Kyrgyzstan, which refused his extraction to Russia. Since then, Skoryakin stayed in Kyrgyzstan as asylum seeker, and his extradition to Russia is illegal. He also has obtained a traveling document and humanitarian visa from Germany, and was ready to travel from Kyrgyzstan to Germany. He received his traveling document 16th of October, but the very same day ten officials came to the shelter he was staying, presented themselves as officials of the Kyrgyzstan police and kidnapped Skoryakin.

While Vladimir Putin was visiting Kyrgyzstan, Lev Skoryakin was arrested but then released after two hours.

In end of June, anarchist Alexei Rozhkov, accused of arson attack against military enlistment office, was kidnapped in Kyrgyzstan. He was illegally extradited to Russia, tortured and remanded.

October 22nd - Anarchist Luca Dolce arrested after two years on run

from ANSA English

Dolce, 37, from Trieste, who is now in prison at Imperia, was identified at the end of a complex investigation involving the DIGOS security police in Trento, Treviso, Trieste, Genoa and Brescia.

Dolce has several previous convictions and has been in prison in Tolmezzo, Ferrara - where he was detained together with anarchist leader Alfredo Cospito - and Modena.

He must serve 3 years, 6 months and 15 days in prison for crimes related to his political activism.

The Central Security Operations Unit of the police captured Dolce in Dolceacqua, in the province of Imperia in Liguria.

October 23rd - Urgent Appeal For Support Of Animal Liberation Comrades Facing Court

from UNOFFENSIVE ANIMAL

A group of folks are facing court in the UK at the end of the month on charges related to the animal liberation struggle.

Based on advice given by their solicitors, they do not wish to publicly explain their charges or potential outcomes, but they are facing a multi-week trial which means the expenses on travel and the loss of work will set them back enormously.

Whilst we wish we could share more about the case, it will be on them to talk about it whenever they are advised to do so and whenever they want to explain what's been going on, but for now we are asking for donations to help them navigate the likely month and a half to two-month process in courts.

There is a GoFundMe <gofund.me/d9691222> set up to raise funds, and whilst there was a very conservative first round of fundraising which was easily raised, they will be needing a lot more funds than that just to cover life and travel for the multiple weeks of trial, so please donate even if it has gone beyond the asking! Show solidarity and ensure they know they are not alone. No one faces the state without solidarity, we are all fighting together!

October 23rd - Imprisoned Anarchist Toby Shone moved to HMP Garth

Imprisoned anarchist Toby Shone has been moved 265 kilometres from his home in Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire and nearly 300 kilometres from support in Bristol to HMP Garth in Leyland, a high security prison near Manchester. Despite being in the resettlement part of his sentence, a vengeful probation and counter-terror team are attempting to isolate Toby from his perceived support base and loved ones in the south of the country and deliberately place him at risk of harm in a notoriously violent Category B prison for those serving sentences of 10 years or more. Probation has demanded Toby serve the rest of his sentence which is just short of 13 months, due for release on 11 November 2024.

Toby was imprisoned in Wandsworth, Bristol and G4S Prison Parc for nearly two years accused of being the administrator of counter-information project 325.nostate.net. After the political prosecution failed and the cops had to drop the case 5 days before trial in October 2021, Toby received a sentence of 3 years 9 months for possession of psychedelic medicines. He was released on 28 December 2022 under heavy restrictions (license conditions) overseen by a multi-agency team (MAPPA) including the National Security Division (counter-terror) and was forced to live in a filthy bail hostel in Gloucester for 9 months. He had just moved back into a flat in the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire when, on the morning of 19 September 2023, he was pulled over and arrested by an armed police unit a few miles from the city of Gloucester. He was accused of being in possession of an [unauthorised] phone and attending a dinner and prisoner letter writing night at BASE anarchist social centre in Bristol in August.

Toby continues to be held as a TACT (Terrorist) prisoner despite being proclaimed Not Guilty of any terrorist offence by a High Court Judge in a court of law in October 2021.

October 24th - Court Rejects Cospito's Appeal for Revocation of 41 Bis

from *La Nemesi* translated by *Abolition Media*

We inform you that on 23 October the outcome of the hearing of 19 October at the Surveillance Court of Rome was announced: the appeal for the early revocation of the detention in 41 bis for the anarchist comrade Alfredo Cospito was rejected. We remind you that Alfredo is currently imprisoned in the prison of Bancali, in Sassari (address: Alfredo Cospito, C. C. "G. Bacchiddu", Provincial Road 56 n. 4, Bancali, 07100 Sassari).

On this occasion, although some anti-terrorism structures (specifically, the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Directorate and the Central Directorate of the Prevention Police) had expressed opinions in favor of the revocation of the detention order in 41 bis, the political will to keep the comrade in this detention regime prevailed.

In recent days, the opinions of these structures have had a certain prominence among the Italian-speaking mass media. In January, the anti-terrorism agency gave its opinions for the first time on the occasion of another request for early revocation, at that time sent to the Minister of Justice Nordio (in addition to the DNAA, at the time the command of the ROS of the carabinieri also expressed itself). If months ago, during the indefinite hunger strike, these opinions in favor of the revocation of 41 bis manifested the contradictory dynamics within the institutions and the repressive apparatus triggered by the international solidarity movement, today they express once again how the mobilization has made evident and consolidated contradictions in the state organism. This is the path on which to continue, making the political cost of these contradictions ever higher.

In rejecting the disgusting slander of the courts about the fact that anarchists can have "leaders" or receive orders, we do not hide the fact that a warning of deterrence for all of us is being played out on the comrade's skin. That warning, today as in the past, must be returned to the sender with the utmost firmness. Anarchists don't need to be instigated or guided by any captive leader; you can do it very well.

October 28th - Rita Zotova and Nikita Hilkevich were released from prison

Today there are two less prisoners in Belarus: Rita Zotova and Nikita Khilkevich have been released.

They served two years in prison for pasting stickers of the anarchist collective “Pramen.” The third defendant in the case, Vadim Denisenko, will spend another six months in prison.

18 Oct - Indigenous rights advocates take fight for clemency to the United Nations

Calls for the release of imprisoned Indigenous freedom fighter Leonard Peltier resounded at the 139th session of the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

MORE:

by Kaitlyn Kennedy (TAG24)

Expanding Indigenous rights and ending extreme sentencing practices were central themes at this year's review of the United States by the UN Human Rights Committee, with the case of Leonard Peltier, the country's longest-held political prisoner, featuring prominently in the proceedings.

A member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Peltier was taken into US custody after he was convicted of killing two FBI agents in a shootout on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota in June 1975. He was sentenced to two terms of life imprisonment and is currently incarcerated in a maximum-security facility in Coleman, Florida.

There is no evidence to justify locking Peltier up for nearly five decades and repeatedly denying him parole, his supporters say. Records suggest the FBI coerced witnesses and excluded and falsified evidence in the 1977 murder trial. Even the top prosecutor in the case, former US Attorney James Reynolds, has called for the American Indian Movement icon's release.

Dr. Changrok Soh of South Korea, vice chair of the Human Rights Committee, agreed with Indigenous representatives in Geneva that Peltier's long imprisonment raises grave concerns. On Tuesday, he asked the US delegation to clarify: "Civil society shadow reports have noted that 'death by incarceration' continues to disproportionately impact Black and Indigenous Peoples in the US. 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 US political prisoner and has served 48 years in prison?"

A representative of the Department of Justice on Wednesday said the US government cannot answer the question, as there is a pending clemency petition for Peltier.

Indigenous rights advocates demand Biden grant clemency to Leonard Peltier

President Joe Biden has the authority to grant clemency to Peltier without congressional approval, but he has so far not chosen to take that step.

Fed up with the US government's failure to adequately address their concerns, civil society NGOs and human rights advocates in Geneva sent a letter to the Department of Justice on Wednesday calling for action to right the grave wrongs committed against Peltier and others held under unjust prison sentences.

The letter – signed by Water Protector Legal Collective, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the Abolitionist Law Center, and more – urges the federal government to commit to "ending life sentences that amount to death by incarceration disproportionately for Black, Brown and Indigenous communities."

Advocates also demanded the Biden administration grant clemency to Peltier and invite the UN Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Peoples to visit the US to study his case and the status of Indigenous communities around the country.

"Leonard's continued incarceration is an open wound for Indigenous Peoples and a visible blemish on the United States' human rights record," the signatories wrote.

25 Oct - One prison guard, 96 abuse charges: women say 'serial rapist' targeted them over a decade

On 15 May 2022, Gregory Rodriguez, a guard at the Central California Women's Facility, ordered a 30-year-old woman in his custody to come to a hearing room at the prison.

MORE:

by Sam Levin (*The Guardian*)

He told her there were no cameras in the room, prison investigators allege, and gave her a choice: she could have sex with him or get a write-up for a rules violation, risking a lengthened prison term, revoked privileges and solitary confinement.

He proceeded to rape her, the investigators say, and would go on to assault her on at least five more occasions.

Jane Doe is one of more than 22 women Rodriguez is suspected of sexually harassing, assaulting and raping at CCWF over the span of nearly a decade, prison officials say. The former officer, who has pleaded not guilty to 96 sexual abuse charges, is now in jail awaiting trial.

The case has raised an urgent question: how could one officer be accused of abusing so many women, over so many years, without getting caught?

An analysis of court records and misconduct data, as well as interviews with five women who spoke to the *Guardian* about Rodriguez's abuse, paint a picture of a system in which the most vulnerable women in the California department of corrections (CDCR) are routinely preyed upon – often lured with promises of basic supplies and small privileges and then threatened into silence.

When women have reported abuse, they have at times faced severe consequences, in some cases leading to longer prison terms and further exposure to their assailants. Some officers have protected their colleagues and facilitated their attacks.

CCWF investigated a report of Rodriguez's abuse as early as 2014, testimony from a prison investigator and a victim reveals, but instead of terminating him, it punished the victim. Court records suggest Rodriguez would go on to commit dozens of additional alleged sexual assaults.

Rodriguez's abusive conduct appears to extend beyond the allegations outlined by the prison's investigators and in the resulting criminal case. *The Guardian* interviewed one woman who said she was assaulted by Rodriguez but never reported it out of fear of retaliation. Advocates say they believe there are more victims.

Abuse of incarcerated women is a systemic problem across the United States – government surveys have estimated that more than 3,500 women are sexually abused by prison and jail staff each year, and that federal employees have abused women in at least two-thirds of federal women's prisons.

Prosecution is rare: since 2014, people incarcerated in California's women's prisons have filed hundreds of complaints of sexual abuse by staff, but Rodriguez is one of only four officers from those institutions confirmed by the state to have faced charges, internal records reveal.

"You can't protect yourself in here," Selina*, one of Rodriguez's alleged victims, said from inside prison. "The women here are so vulnerable and so alone, and he clearly thought he was above the law."

'No one will believe you'

Gregory Rodriguez, now 55, appears to have spent most of his career at CDCR. He started with the department in 1995 at age 27, training for two months before he was assigned to men's prisons.

In 2010, he moved to CCWF, an overcrowded women's facility with 2,400 residents, in Chowchilla, a remote rural town hours away from the state's major metro areas.

The first alleged incident documented in court files occurred in April 2014, roughly four years after he started at CCWF, although it would take nearly a decade for details to emerge publicly. Jamie Torres, a CDCR internal affairs special agent who interviewed the victim in October 2022, recently testified in court that Rodriguez had "escorted" a woman "behind the work exchange" – a checkpoint that women pass through on their way to prison jobs – and then "she had sex with him". By law, an officer cannot have a consensual relationship with an incarcerated person, and any sexual contact is considered abuse.

Rodriguez continued to assault the woman through September 2014 – at times in a substance abuse treatment building as well as in clinics, Torres said; Rodriguez allegedly told her she was his "girlfriend" and gave her underwear, cosmetics, jewelry and alcohol. "She felt she was doing what she felt she had to," the investigator said.

A pattern emerged in Rodriguez's tactics over time, records and internal investigators' testimony indicate. Multiple women allege he first verbally harassed them, commenting on their breasts, tattoos, hair and gym workouts and making explicitly sexual remarks. Most said he isolated them in areas without cameras, typically under false pretenses, claiming they were needed for appointments or cleaning services. He then asked for sex in exchange for items such as gum or tobacco, while also threatening to write them up or "make prison very difficult" if they told anyone or didn't comply.

"No one would believe [you]," one woman said he told her.

The majority of rapes later alleged in the criminal case occurred in 2021 and 2022 in the board of parole hearings (BPH) area, where incarcerated residents have confidential legal visits or appear before commissioners to plead for their freedom.

One woman thought she was going to BPH for a meeting about an early release program, but she was met by Rodriguez, who raped her, internal investigators say. Another believed she was meeting the head of the prison there. Rodriguez allegedly offered extra phone time to two women, including one who had just lost a loved one and took the opportunity to talk to her family; she said he began assaulting her while she was still crying after the call.

One woman said she confided in Rodriguez about her struggles with substance use, and he coerced her into sex by offering to get her suboxone, medication to treat addiction. She complied, but never got the prescription, and instead he gave her heroin, she reported.

She overdosed and was hospitalized.

'Interrogated' and sent to solitary

CCWF looked into Rodriguez as early as 2014, an investigator revealed in the later criminal case. But the investigator's testimony suggests that the prison's first documented investigation failed his victim.

Each California prison has an investigative services unit (ISU), made up of officers who review claims of staff misconduct and investigate incarcerated people accused of violations such as bringing in contraband.

In 2014, CCWF conducted an "administrative investigation" into reports of "overfamiliarity and a sexual relation" between Rodriguez and an incarcerated woman, the investigator testified in court.

That woman, Valerie*, told the *Guardian* a staff member, not her, had reported Rodriguez to CCWF. In the months leading up to the investigation, Valerie said, she had been groomed, coerced and then repeatedly assaulted. She had been terrified to come forward, she said, hurt that she had initially trusted Rodriguez and scared by his threats after he started assaulting her.

She wanted the assaults to stop, she said, but was desperate to avoid repercussions: "At that time, I felt I was responsible for all of the abuse...I just felt trapped because I couldn't talk to anybody."

When ISU eventually brought her in for questioning, Valerie said, "they interrogated me, as if I was the one to be blamed".

Officers implied Valerie had behaved inappropriately and "manipulated" Rodriguez, she recalled. She said she had wanted to tell investigators what she'd endured, but that their threats and intimidating questions had made it clear they did not see her as a victim, so she told them nothing had happened, hoping she wouldn't face further consequences.

While the investigation continued, she was sent to solitary confinement, known as the security housing unit (SHU), she said, where she recalled being stuck for several months. She received no mental health care while in the SHU, other than brief check-ins from a clinician who went cell to cell to "make sure we're not suicidal", she said. During this time, she was no longer allowed to have face-to-face visits, so was only able to see her mother behind glass.

She said she had tried to confide in a male prison psychologist, alluding to the sexual abuse, but that he had quickly made her uncomfortable, asking her questions about masturbation, and, at the session's end, hugging her. She further shut down: "I was like: I don't want to do this anymore."

She eventually learned CDCR would be transferring her to another prison farther from her family, who had themselves relocated to be closer to CCWF: "I was dealing with that guilt, like I messed up again." Rodriguez remained at the prison. Terri Hardy, a CDCR spokesperson, said in an email that in November 2014, the prison "received information that indicated there was possible sexual misconduct" by Rodriguez and "immediately" opened an investigation, but "the case was closed due to insufficient evidence".

An embattled warden

Colby Lenz, an advocate with the California Coalition for Women Prisoners, who is working with several of Rodriguez's alleged victims, said that over the years, his behavior had become so widely known that some women developed a "buddy system" to try to avoid being alone with him.

Selina told the *Guardian* that after Rodriguez groped her so blatantly and suddenly, "I looked at him and said, 'You've done this before. This is easy for you.'" When she returned to her housing unit in hysterics, two women appeared unfazed: "They said, 'That's just him.' The officers hide everything."

Records and interviews with several survivors of abuse in CDCR reveal most felt unable to speak out.

Harassment and assault by guards is widespread and normalized, women said, noting these abuses occur across institutions. In past years, there have been major scandals at the other CDCR women's prison near Los Angeles, the federal institution in the Bay Area and LA youth jails. Women know that filing a complaint is extremely risky and unlikely to result in the prison taking action, as their cases are often difficult to prove, especially when there is no physical evidence or witnesses. As Rodriguez repeatedly reminded them: who would believe them?

At CCWF, some of Rodriguez's victims said, other guards at times appeared suspicious of Rodriguez but did not intervene. Jane Doe, who is part of the criminal case, alleged that after Rodriguez raped her, three officers subsequently questioned her about her whereabouts during the incident. She told them she'd had an

attorney video visit, as Rodriguez had ordered her to say, and although the officers knew this was untrue and one of them appeared surprised, they didn't report the incident. At a later medical appointment, she said, she requested STD and pregnancy testing, but was told she'd have to admit to engaging in "risky behavior" and face discipline.

Some guards, the women said, actively helped Rodriguez secure time with prisoners alone, intimidated victims or approached victims themselves.

Valerie said at least four officers had started harassing and propositioning her after Rodriguez started assaulting her.

Another woman who has sued Rodriguez for sexual assault said that after she had spoken to investigators, two officers who she believed were friends with Rodriguez accosted her on her way to church, ripped up her paperwork and put her in handcuffs without cause. She stopped going to church.

The prison's leadership has also faced scrutiny for facilitating Rodriguez's behavior. Mike Pallares, the warden at CCWF during the reported rapes, "failed to protect" women from a "serial rapist", Robert Chalfant, an attorney for seven women, has alleged in filings. Chalfant's lawsuits say Pallares had received complaints about Rodriguez prior to many of the 2022 assaults, but did not take action nor did he launch internal affairs investigations.

On the contrary, according to Chalfant, the warden approved Rodriguez's overtime requests to work at BPH, where he allegedly committed the rapes.

In a December statement, after two women filed lawsuits, Pallares said Rodriguez "shamefully hid behind his badge and used it to victimize a vulnerable population". But he did not acknowledge that he himself was twice sued by female colleagues for sexual misconduct. A CCWF administrative worker has alleged Pallares coerced her into sex in 2015, in a lawsuit that was recently dismissed. And a former female warden of the prison separately alleged that Pallares made unwanted advances against her when she was his boss in a lawsuit that is ongoing.

Tremaine Carroll, another woman who says Rodriguez abused her, has also accused Pallares of sexually assaulting her, in official complaints and a lawsuit. Carroll, who is a trans woman, has said Pallares coerced her by threatening to send her back to men's prisons: "The threat of being sent back to men's prisons is worse than having a gun pointed at me."

Pallares and his attorneys did not respond to requests for comment. His lawyers argued in filings that there was no reason for him to believe the overtime was "nefarious" and that the women's complaints have failed to prove that the warden was "on notice" that Rodriguez posed a "substantial risk of serious harm". The state justice department, which is representing Pallares in several civil cases, declined to comment.

'Can't guarantee protection'

It's unclear what exactly prompted the recent internal inquiry that ultimately resulted in Rodriguez's prosecution, but CDCR said in a press release in December 2022 that the department and the CCWF ISU had begun investigating the guard in July 2022, "immediately" after "discovering information that suggested sexual misconduct". The release said he "retired" in August of 2022 after he was approached by investigators.

The criminal records indicate that women increasingly spoke to investigators last fall.

For some of the women, speaking up came at a heavy cost. Latasha Brown, who says Rodriguez assaulted her in the BPH area, said that after she had spoken to a civil attorney investigating Rodriguez, a process separate from the institution's investigation, officers placed her in segregation, a form of solitary

confinement. She said they had forced her to do multiple strip searches for no discernible reason, in a manner that felt cruel and retaliatory: "I'm the alleged victim and you're treating me like a perpetrator. I just wanted my humanity recognized."

While in isolation, cut off from loved ones and at one point without a utensil to eat with, she struggled with suicidal thoughts: "I wanted to check out. I was freezing and eating meals with my fingers and I didn't want to live through that." CDCR eventually transferred her to another institution, which she believed was for her safety, but again, she was placed in solitary: "I felt victimized all over again. Being in segregation was more traumatic than what I'd been through."

Carroll said she too had been placed in segregation after reporting abuse: "That is retaliatory, and that is why victims don't come forward."

Rodriguez's lawyer, Roger Wilson, did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

But he argued in a July 2023 hearing about the case that there were "no documented threats" made by Rodriguez, noting the former prison guard did not actually issue rules violations against the women. Wilson also claimed that for some women, there was "no evidence of any force [or] duress", suggesting they were "bargaining" and "negotiating" with Rodriguez for contraband he offered. For one woman, he claimed "there was consent". The lawyer further argued there was no evidence beyond the woman's claims of Rodriguez bringing in heroin.

Wilson argued for Rodriguez's pretrial release, saying he had been living with and caring for his elderly mother and had a close relationship with his 19-year-old daughter. He noted Rodriguez had no criminal record and that he was still collecting his pension. A judge declined to free him and set the case for trial, which is expected next year.

CDCR declined multiple interview requests over several weeks and a spokesperson for Governor Gavin Newsom declined to comment. Jennifer Benavidez, CDCR's deputy director of facility operations in the division of adult institutions, said in an email that when women report abuse, they are placed in "administrative segregation" for their protection "only when no other housing alternatives are available", and said the "victim will continue to receive all programs and privileges" while in isolation. She said an accused employee would have no contact with incarcerated people during the investigation.

While CDCR says it identified "more than 22 potential victims" of Rodriguez, the charges were filed on behalf of only 13 women. The Madera County district attorney, Sally Moreno, who is prosecuting the case, said in an interview that she had filed charges she could prove "beyond a reasonable doubt" and also noted some claims of misconduct might not have been criminal.

She acknowledged there were probably others besides Rodriguez who had abused women in the prison, but had not faced charges, because victims had never reported them or CDCR did not bring cases to her: "Anytime you've got women in this super-compromised position where there are these formal and informal power structures, they're going to be taken advantage of."

Why was Rodriguez caught? "It takes one person to speak the truth and that gives other people courage," said Moreno, noting that when one woman reports abuse and does not face retaliation, it can snowball. Investigators also have suggested that the case is supported by video corroboration, including footage that appeared to show Rodriguez touching himself while waiting for one woman to approach, then the two of them entering a closet-size room, and another video showing him adjusting his zipper as he exited a room with a different woman.

Moreno said she hoped the case would inspire more women to come forward, but understood why survivors may still be hesitant: "There is this secrecy in our prisons. I would never tell a woman I can 100%

guarantee that you'll be protected, because we just can't do that. So they do take risks when they report this."

In January, a month after CDCR announced it had referred Rodriguez to prosecutors, the department reassigned Pallares to an associate warden position in a different prison; a CDCR spokesperson told the Sacramento Bee at the time: "We thank him for his time and work at the institution."

Nancy Skinner, a state senator who called a hearing on CDCR sexual violence, said she was concerned that Pallares was transferred after being accused of sexual misconduct: "I don't think he should have been allowed to move on. There should have been more consequences."

*Selina and Valerie are pseudonyms to protect their anonymity as they remain incarcerated and continue to fear retaliation

25 Oct - Postponing Pushing Down The Walls 2023

As some of you may already be aware, our homies in Orange County ABC decided to postpone Pushing Down The Walls 2023.

MORE:

Originally scheduled for Saturday 10/21/23, it has been pushed to a date which will be announced shortly. On 10/18/2023, our organizing team was made aware that a collection of Palestinian organizations had announced a march in the Pershing Square area of Los Angeles for the exact same time as our burpee marathon. This location is also the adjacent zip code to the venue being used for PDTW. To say it another way, the Bad Dogg DIY space is about a 15 min drive in Saturday lunchtime traffic to where the march began.

This obviously presented a lot of practical problems which all stemmed from a (justifiable) drop off in attendance to the burpee marathon. By some reports, as many as 10,000 marched that day. However, our reasoning wasn't only practical. Abolition Now OC, the org we partnered with this year, composed this statement for Instagram which expresses exactly how recent events in occupied Palestine shaped our decision:

"In the wake of the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people by Israeli occupation forces and the backing of the international community, including the US government. In light of this devastation, we have decided to postpone our Burpees Marathon event as it coincides with local marches and rallies calling for an immediate ceasefire, an end to the occupation, and freedom for Palestine and its people. We stand in solidarity with our community and do not want to detract attention from the dire situation at hand. The benefit show, aka after party, will still be taking place and we encourage our comrades to join us in community, with a portion of the proceeds going towards @mecaforpeace. Stay tuned for the new flyer out soon.

All the more, because our event is to uplift abolition and the freedom of political prisoners, it only makes sense that we postpone to a date that will be announced in order to focus on our attention on our siblings currently under siege. We also know that abolition is a transnational project, and that settler-colonialism, the military-industrial and ongoing incarceration of over 2 million people in the world's "largest open-air prison" in Gaza, are issues that are deeply tied to our own struggles for liberation.

We appreciate y'all's understanding and solidarity as we remain committed to the struggle for liberation for all. We'll keep you posted on the new date ASAP"

Of course, we are happy to answer any questions and open to any input. Other than that, please be on the lookout for the new date for PDTW 2023.

26 Oct - Illustrated Guide Version 16.8 Uploaded!

https://nycabc.wordpress.com/2023/10/26/guide_16_8

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.

27 Oct - Marius Back in Texas

As of September 18th, Marius Mason is at FMC Fort Worth, waiting to find out possible timelines for transition surgery, if allowed to continue.

MORE:

I continue to take my HRT therapy and am meeting other trans inmates here – all transwomen who are oftentimes waiting for THEIR transfer to a female facility! I am hoping that this policy will continue to help many trans people, but am concerned that this policy may be in danger of reversal if the far right has their way! Please continue to fight for trans and queer people in prison, as so often we are invisible to the wider public and easier to shove under the rug and hide. I know that it is the support that we have from our community on the outside that helps our cause and gives us care and strength.

Thank you very much for your support in letters and cards this past year – I have a list of everywhere I got mail from, but it is packed up in my property and in a box on its way to Texas right now! I have even gotten a few letters at my new address here – but also, sadly, a few documents saying that the intended letter was returned to sender because of the new rules here at FMC Ft. Worth. So, to lessen the aggravation for anyone kind enough to write to me – here are a few of the different rules...

- 1) all letters have to be written on only one side of the page and are limited to 5 pages.
- 2) no letters that are on colored paper or on cardstock.
- 3) any photos must be sent through a company and not directly from the sender. No more than 25 photos will be accepted.
- 4) all acceptable letters will be photo-copied in black and white and that copy given to the inmate.

I am sorry to say that all the beautiful original artwork that I have received over the years will not be allowed into this facility. That is a great sadness to me, as I have been given such amazing original art from so many great people from all over the world. Thank you, everyone, for keeping me in their thoughts and including me in their outreach and educational work. I am so encouraged by the campaigns that continue to run bravely in the face of the worst destructive efforts – long live the Wild Free Earth!

I want to make more of an effort to reach out to you all – especially as it will be harder to write as many emails or send as many letters as I have before (which never seemed enough then). I will be facing a higher monthly fine payment now, as Congress has asked the prison administrators to enforce higher payments...but I will use the website more to compensate.

Thank you all, again – for taking this journey with me, for seeing me through so many years and over so many hurdles...I am constantly humbled and warmed by the power of solidarity. Together, we are strong!

28 Oct - Land Defender Begins Trial in Wet'suwet'en Pipeline Conflict

Land Defender, Sabina Dennis, Dakelh, faces criminal contempt charges as trial is set to begin October 30th.

MORE:

by Jennifer Wickham (*Gidimt'en Checkpoint Media*)

This week of trial will focus primarily on Dennis' arrest from November 18, 2021, following a 56-day occupation of the Coastal GasLink Drill Pad Site, a highly contested river crossing site underneath the Wedzin Kwah (Morice River).

Dennis is one of the 32 people arrested between November 18 & 19th 2021, during militarized raids of the Gidimt'en Checkpoint and Coyote Camp. This is one of the few cases from three large scale police raids on Wet'suwet'en Yintah since 2019 that have gone to trial.

A 2018 Injunction from Justice Church continues to threaten the right for Wet'suwet'en people to steward their lands, and has enabled large scale police violence against the Wet'suwet'en and their allies. These upcoming trials will be overseen by Justice Tammen. Dennis and others arrested at Coyote camp potentially face 30 days jail time if convicted.

"We denounce the criminalization of our relatives at the hands of the RCMP and Canadian justice system, we are the rightful caretakers of this land. Our law has existed for far longer than the courts that continue to oppress our people. This is another attempt to undermine our power as Wet'suwet'en people for the benefit and greed of Industry." says Dinĭ Ze Woos.

Despite years of resistance, and lack of free prior and informed consent, the colonial courts continue to uphold the status quo of destroying Indigenous land and violently removing Wet'suwet'en people and their guests from the Yintah.

Dennis states "We need to stand in the power of our laws as Indigenous Peoples, this is an assertion of our ancient law and continuation of our resistance. We will stand together as Indigenous nations with a long history of standing up for our people and our lands"

The remainder of the arrestees, including Sleydo' Molly Wickham, will be facing trial dates in late November and scheduled to finish in the New Year. In addition to these cases, Dinĭ ze' Dtsa'hyl Adam Gagnon will complete his criminal trial.

28 Oct - Certain Days 2024 Calendars are back from the printer

We are happy to say the 2024 Certain Days calendars are back from the printer and are ready to be mailed.

MORE:

If you previously ordered a copy already, they will be sent shortly. If you have not ordered yet, it's time!

How to order the Certain Days calendar:

- In the United States, order via Burning Books at tiny.cc/Days_Burning
- Your group can buy 10 or more for the rate of \$10 each (or 50 or more for the rate of \$9 each) and then sell them for \$15, keeping the difference for your organization. Many campaigns, infoshops and projects do this as a way of raising funds and spreading awareness about political prisoners.
- Canada (1-9 copies) via Left Wing Books: leftwingbooks.net/en-us/products/certain-days-freedom-for-political-prisoners-calendar-2024
- Canada (bulk. 10+ copies): certaindays.org/order
- Prisoner copies (\$8 & only for people in prison and jail): certaindays.org/order/prisoners

The *Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar* is a joint fundraising and educational project between outside organizers across North America and political prisoner Xinachtli (s/n Alvaro Luna Hernandez) in Texas. We were happy to welcome founding members Herman Bell and Robert Seth Hayes (Rest in Power) home from prison in 2018, and founding member David Gilbert home from prison in 2021. We work from an anti-imperialist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, feminist, queer-and trans-liberationist position.

The 2024 calendar features artwork and essays from Josh MacPhee, Ed Mead, Ricardo Levins Morales, Farhan Ahmed, Dio Cramer, David Gilbert, Taller Ahuehuete, Ryan Fatica, Ruby, Sean Swain, N.O. Bonzo, Support Eric King, Praxis Vgz, Dominique Conway, Xinachtli, Josh Davidson, Jordan Halliday, Leonard Peltier, Zane McNeill, Jessica Sabogal, Dr. Tolbert Small, Roger Peet, and P!nk Bloc Montréal.

Past proceeds have benefitted Release Aging People in Prison - RAPP , Mutulu Shakur legal support, Sundiata Acoli release fund, Palestinian Youth Movement, Burning Books expansion, Puget Sound Prisoner Support, Coalition to Decarcerate Illinois, Appalachians Against pipelines, Community Resource Initiative- CA, P4W Memorial Collective Prisoners' Justice Day healing circle, Wet'suwet'en Solidarity Fund, Cascadia Forest Defenders and NorCal Resist.

9 Nov - Readings from THE RESERVOIR

WHAT: Reading

WHEN: 7:00pm, Thursday, November 9th

WHERE: PIT Records & Books, 411 South 5th Street, Brooklyn

COST: FREE

MORE:

Woodbine is releasing the second issue of The Reservoir, Communion, this month, published with Autonomedia. This issue features new texts by Kazembe Balagun, Elizabeth Povinelli, Geert Lovink, Kristin Ross, Experimental Jetset, Marcello Tari, & a previously unpublished interview with Félix Guattari. There's original art, comics, essays, fiction, illustrations, interviews, letters, photography, poetry, transcripts, and translations from more than 30 contributors, with design by Kevin McCaughey.

10 Nov - Counter Power Zine Fest

WHAT: Detainee Empowerment Project Fundraiser

WHEN: 7:00pm, Friday, November 10th

WHERE: May Day Space - 176 St. Nicholas Avenue, Brooklyn

COST: \$10-20, sliding scale

MORE:

Food not Bombs will be serving food, local radical artists and groups will be tabling, and these bands are all playing:

- o Gasket (Baltimore Hardcore)
- o Artificial Scarcity (Philly/NYC Eco-Grind)
- o half/cross (Philly powerviolence)
- o Chemical Man (NYC Grind)
- o Interzone Agent + Cathari (Rhode Island Art Noise/Philly Noisecore Collaboration Set)

12 Nov - MACC Care Assembly

WHAT: Assembly

WHEN: 3:00pm, Sunday, November 12th

WHERE: PIT Records & Books, 411 South 5th Street, Brooklyn

COST: FREE

MORE:

SCHEDULE:

- o Self-defense class Muay Thai Martial arts training - no experience necessary, show up at 3 pm
- o Political education session
- o Care exchange & a community meal

What is the care exchange? As we sit down to share a meal we check in and exchange our requests and offers, in the spirit of mutual aid. Requests – do you need help with anything? Offers – do you have any skills, time, or resources to offer? This is a conversation to help facilitate building and maintaining relationships among us by identifying needs and sharing what we can in solidarity.

For COVID safety: Show a negative rapid test; free tests will be provided at the door.