

TOTALLY INDYPENDENT

Newsletter of Haringey Solidarity Group

www.haringey.org.uk

AN ATTACK ON ONE IS AN ATTACK ON ALL



In a shocking display of the famous 'British values', the Met police launched a violent attack on the North London Kurdish community on 27th November. There were night raids on the homes of six people, with doors smashed, arrests made, and people beaten up, including elderly people and a 15-year-old child. At the same time, the Kurdish Community Centre (KCC) on Green Lanes was stormed and occupied in a military-style operation involving helicopters, dogs and hundreds of cops.

The families of those arrested were not allowed back in their homes for a number of days, and the KCC was held for 8 days of a ridiculously expensive 24-hour police occupation. This violence was done under the Terrorism Act, which we predicted was going to be

abused in this manner when it was introduced by Blair 20 years ago.

Nobody who lives in Haringey feels they need 'protection' from the Kurdish community, as the police are claiming. Many of the Kurdish community came here as refugees from state repression in Turkey and are now facing something similar here in Haringey. The doors of the KCC, which the police have smashed, were always open and the centre is used not just by Kurdish people but also by many other people as a meeting space, social centre or café.

The trial of those arrested is set for January 2026. Until then they have to live with sadistic bail conditions of a curfew, electronic tag and signing into a police station every day. The 'evidence' presented against them at the hearing

amounted to possession of books and the distribution of flyers.

We join with the community in demanding the dropping of charges, a public apology from the Met police and Mayor of London and the delisting by the British government of the PKK as a 'terrorist organisation'. This so-called 'prevention of terror' is in fact terrorising our friends in the community.

The Overground line which runs behind the KCC has been renamed the 'Suffragette Line', but this empty gesture means nothing when Kurdish activists, who organise under the slogan 'Women, Life, Freedom', are slandered as 'terrorists' by the State, just as the Suffragettes were a hundred years ago.

Photo credits: @davgilz on Instagram

SOLIDARITY AGAINST FASCISM

In recent years, we have seen the rise of far-right movements in the UK, reaching a peak lately with the Tommy Robinson rallies. This wave of neo-fascism is not just a random event; it shows deep-seated racism and xenophobia, driven by a large number of people being forced to leave their homes.

More and more immigrants and refugees are escaping war and environmental destruction, hoping for a better life in the wealthy societies of Western countries.

This far-right threat has been fuelled by harmful stories in both the government and media, leading to more violence and riots against marginalized groups, including Muslims, non-binary individuals, and trans people. To fight this, it is important to support people of different identities in the common struggle against racism and all forms of oppression. The voices and experiences of all oppressed people are essential in challenging the current system.

Additionally, neo-fascism often uses violent acts to support white supremacy, misusing the language of rebellion. Unlike real movements for change, such as those seen in Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Greece, Spain, Egypt, Turkey, and Hong Kong, which come from the lower classes fighting against their oppressors, neo-fascist violence helps keep existing power structures in place.

The rise of the far-right can also be linked to the mainstream left's failure to effectively challenge the political and economic systems. This has left many working-class people open to exploitation.

The far-right takes advantage of this vulnerability, creating divisions within the working class and reinforcing social barriers.

To tackle these issues, it is important to move away from traditional electoral politics and instead focus on building grassroots anti-fascist movements based on direct action and community organising. These movements should aim to free public spaces and rebuild social structures that promote equality and reject hierarchies. By doing this, we can hope to create a more inclusive and fair society that stands against the rise of far-right ideologies.



MIDDLE EASTERN CONFLICTS, AND BEYOND



East is another chapter in a long-running conflict that may never end. As long as global capitalism struggles to survive, the powers of the state and corporations will fight to maintain control.

Calls for ceasefires and international action are essential, but this Middle East conflict isn't just another military expansion. It's part of a bigger proxy war, growing as global elites compete for their interests in a collapsing world.

Israel is quickly expanding its military operations across multiple areas in the Middle East. As images of missiles raining down like meteors fill the news and the global consciousness, millions of people are caught in the chaos of one of the worst conflicts in recent memory.

Israel's far-right government is stuck in a cycle of constant escalation. History shows that once fascism gains power, it relies on aggression to stay in control, using nationalism to justify endless war. In this case, the ongoing conflict is no accident—it's part of the plan. With or without U.S. support, Israel's actions are meant to protect the interests of both the Israeli and U.S. military-industrial complexes.

Both Israel and Iran use nationalism and religion to justify their aggression, claiming it is necessary for security. Israel's leaders want to reshape the Middle East by promoting an ideology of Jewish supremacy.

Iran frames its actions as a "holy war," using the conflict to keep its regional power and stay connected with China and Russia. Both countries are engaged in a war by proxy, while the media speculates whether this will lead to World War III. But what if the Great War of our time has already started?

This conflict is unfolding as global power shifts, with the world's strongest countries competing for control in a world facing climate change and economic collapse. Warfare has affected the Middle East and beyond for two decades, but now it's getting worse.

As social unrest and economic crises grow, elites have used technology and fear from the "War on Terror" to increase military force, surveillance, and control. Military spending has gone up, not to create peace, but to fuel more conflicts.

The war in Ukraine has been stuck in a stalemate for over two years. The crisis in the Middle

...And the global fight for Peace and Justice

Over the past year, major protests have risen against the ethnic cleansing and genocide happening in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon. Movements like Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) have used non-violent pressure to oppose Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

For decades, global conflicts have sparked anti-war movements, including opposition to wars involving Israel. From protests against the Vietnam War to the mass demonstrations after 9/11 against U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, these movements often highlight the role of imperialism and colonialism in perpetuating violence, with immense costs in human lives and suffering.

Unfortunately, the ongoing need for action in support of peace and justice around the world remains as urgent as ever.

JUST VOTING IS NOT DEMOCRACY

In 2024, four billion people in 76 nations will have had the chance to vote in their countries' elections, the most in any year on record.

Yet, according to research by the University of Cambridge's new Centre for the Future of Democracy, dissatisfaction with democratic politics among people around the world has increased from 47.9% to 57.5% over the last 25 years, using the largest dataset ever created on global attitudes to democracy.

Data collected through other surveys and studies clearly show decreasing voter turnout in all democracies since the 1980s.

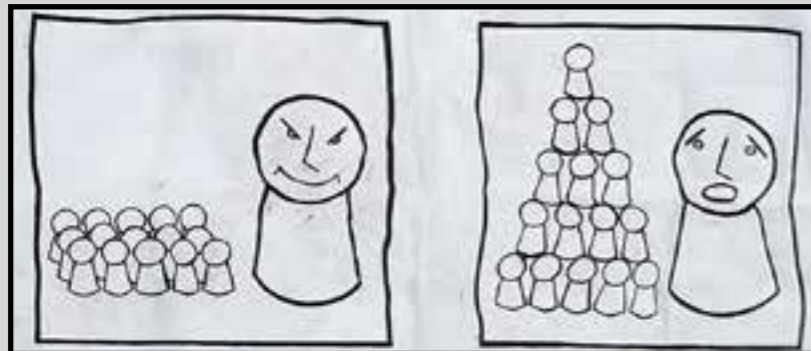
Fewer than 45% rate the leader of their country positively. Even fewer have favourable views of opposition leaders in their country. In most countries, the public has a low opinion of major political parties.

Across 24 countries, roughly 74% say elected officials do not care what people like them think.

Young people especially were found to feel excluded from important government decisions that affect their lives

and future, telling researchers that their country's leaders aren't working in their interests.

Another UN global survey found that 76% of respondents under 30 think politicians do not listen to young people. In South



Africa as much as 90% shared those views, as did 80% of those in Spain and the United Kingdom.

It's very clear that most people around the world are not happy with the corruption in their countries. Selling off resources to the highest bidder with little or no benefit to its citizens, or the cronyism of elected officials, accepting luxury gifts in exchange for favours while many struggle to put food on the table.

Carrying on this way, allowing the elites to act in their own interests while ignoring the people they rule over does not make sense. We need change, and we need it now!

We often hear that without our

leaders things would fall apart, without government there would be chaos and disorder, but that is what we have now. Over 50 wars/conflicts worldwide, extreme poverty, homelessness, deaths of thousands every year through easily curable illnesses.

To top it all a looming climate catastrophe which threatens all life on this planet. Governments are the problem, they created these situations.

So what's the alternative? We believe that we need to rid ourselves of the people in power and their institutions and organise in ways where we all have a say in how society is run for the benefit of all not just the few. By taking control of our workplaces and communities, working cooperatively together and looking out for and caring for the vulnerable people around us.

It needs to happen if we want to see the changes that people are so desperate for. Electing officials who don't hear you, don't represent you, don't care about you, won't change anything. Real change can only come from its citizens taking control of their own lives. It can only come from you.

FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS

The right to protest is under ever-greater attack - threatening our liberty, our right to free speech and our human rights. In 2023, a year of massive demonstrations and strikes, the Tory government passed the Public Order Act hoping to clampdown on everyone's ability to peacefully protest whilst trying to demonise and scapegoat protesters.



The Act is designed to make people fearful about speaking out against the government and its institutions, and the new Labour government doesn't seem to be in a hurry to repeal the Act. After all, the only people who benefit from silencing dissent are those in positions of power, who don't want to be challenged or held to account.

The Act will introduce yet more draconian powers. We know from

history that without protest, there is no social progress. Even without the Public Order Act, protests can now be threatened with being shut down if they're considered 'too noisy' or likely to be a 'nuisance' - with new police powers to prevent protests occurring outside of major transport networks, oil and gas and energy supplies. This extends the use of stop and search powers - including suspicionless stop and search - to protests. Introducing

new 'protest banning orders' that aim to prevent individuals from attending protests at all.

The UK has a long and proud history of protests that have driven positive change in society. It's ironic then that opposite the Houses of Parliament there are statues of Pankhurst, Gandhi and Mandela who were recognised for their struggles. Why? Because

these people fought for democracy. They battled to bring about the rights we see today. And how did they do that? They helped build mass movements which challenged injustice, and defied oppressive laws.

Faced with multiple crises, we've no choice but to fight back. Wherever there is oppression, there must be resistance.

ITALIAN WORKERS DRIVING CHANGE

In July 2021, bosses told 400 workers at the GKN autoparts factory in Florence they were to be sacked. Instead of going quietly, the workers seized their factory to stop its closure and are still in occupation today. It's the longest factory occupation in Italian history.

The workers have received huge support - demonstrations have seen up to 50,000 people on them - many from the climate movement. Inspired by this the workers developed a Lucas Plan style alternative for the factory. Now, instead of parts for luxury cars they plan to build cargo bikes and solar panels. They have already produced a prototype of the cargo bike; and are now looking

at starting to mass produce them.

They have set themselves the target of raising one million euros in a "shareholder campaign". This will allow them to run the factory under workers control and start production of the cargo bikes and solar panels. So far, people have pledged 1.3 million euros.

UK group, Reel News, have produced a video about the workers which you can see here - www.reelnews.co.uk Share this with anyone you know who wants to see a transition away from fossil fuels.

They need our support; by translating materials into other languages; to look at the

production plan to help improve their designs. If you know of co-operative or group who would be interested in buying the cargo bikes or solar panels, that would be incredibly useful too. If you think you can help email them at collettivo.gkn.firenze@gmail.com.

As the workers say, they can't create an alternative model to capitalist fossil fuel production in just one factory - but they can create an example of what is possible.

Support them in their battle for a liveable, sustainable future

For more info:
www.insorgiamo.org

For info about the Lucas Plan :
www.lucasplan.org.uk

ABOLISH TRANSPORT FARES

Many of our most basic rights were once seen as unaffordable luxuries - for instance, free education or the NHS. In the 21st century, will new unaffordable luxuries become rights no one would dare questioning? There's one candidate: fare-free public transport (FFPT).

It's a surprisingly fast-spreading trend: from less than 100 in 2017, there are now some 400 places worldwide, where public transport is entirely free at the point of use - in particular France, Poland, Brazil and America. In India, five states made buses free for the 100 million women living there. In the UK, Glasgow is planning to introduce a limited fare-free pilot.

Abolishing transport fares is first a social measure. It opens

the city to all, be it commuting to work, taking the kids out or socialising. It changes the balance of power in social and geographical relations across the city. It also reduces air pollution, and shows how green measures can actually make life better.

"Well, we simply can't fund it", you might think. But the collection and spending of public money is not a pure accounting problem: it is a political choice. We should all have a say on how to spend public revenue. In Barcelona, almost 90% of the 2016-2019 budget was debated and decided by residents. London

could take inspiration from this example of participatory democracy.

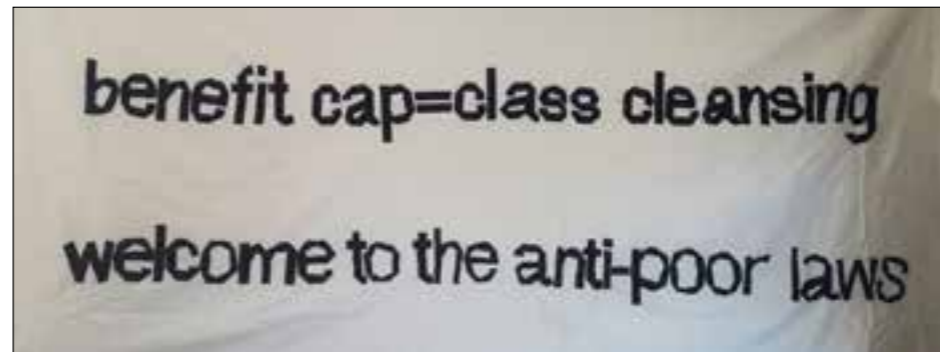
Fares provide half of TfL's budget, so abolishing them may require new funding sources. But other FFPT programs around the world can inform a democratic debate on which funding sources to choose. We can also combine FFPT with other bold demands: say, target the London finance industry, or divest from fossil fuel projects.

It is time start having this discussion. The Fare-Free London campaign is starting it, and all Londoners should participate.

Fare Free London:
<https://www.farefreelondon.org/>



SCRAP THE CAP



Brought in by the Tory/Lib Dem government in 2013, the Benefit Cap is one of the nastier bits of law punishing those of us that rely on benefits.

Recently, people have been demanding the labour government scrap the "two child benefit cap". Under this you get benefits for the first two children, but no extra money for extra kids. It hurts both working and non-working families. So governments lies about "supporting working families" are just that - lies.

But a second bit of the benefit cap harms even more people. Initially,

families in London couldn't get more than £26,000 in total benefits - what the Tories said was an average income. Funny then, as incomes rose, in 2016 it was cut to £23,000 for families (of any size) and £15,400 for single people. With rents in Haringey (and all of UK) stupidly high, most single people and families are having their already low income, cut even further.

It's been calculated some 1.6 million children live in families affected by these caps. That's one in every nine kids. 60% are working families.

Scrapping the benefit cap will take 300,000 kids and their families out

of poverty. Another 800,000 would also benefit.

We claim to live in a civilised country but families are starving, many of them working in low paid jobs, because we don't give them enough money to eat.

The Tories brought the benefit cap in to save money and instead give tax cuts to the rich. If Labour don't scrap the cap, they are just as guilty of starving our children. And they won't get rid of it. Well not unless we all push them to. So, join your local claimants group; join us at HSG to try and defect it; bombard your councillors and MP's to tell Starmer to scrap the cap.

Haringey Claimants Justice Campaign can be contacted at:
haringeyclaimantjustice@gmail.com
Or email HSG at:
info@haringey.org.uk

THE MACHINERY OF ADDICTION

It's been a while that social media bosses regularly make the headlines, but the reason why is changing: now it often has to do with politics. The world is awakening to the reality that while Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg and the like pretend to champion "freedom of speech", their platforms are designed to amplify some voices while leaving others shouting into the void. They control people's capacity to be heard, and that gives them a chilling amount of power.

Ironically, mainstream media are outraged by it, even though for decades, they were the only ones controlling who gets heard in the public debate.

But digital platforms are different.

They manipulate our attention itself, to maximise the time we spend online. As they put it, the "trigger" to use the platform must be "internalised" through "habit-forming products" - in plain terms, they purposely engineer our addictions to social media. This creates a vicious circle: as we engage more with the platform, more data is harvested to tune the algorithms that keep us addicted.

These aggressive methods have changed our daily lives. Today, digital platforms' immense influence keeps expanding, from how our gaze and fingers move on screens to the way we socialise, date or organise our communities. They shape behaviour and extract new "patterns" to sell to advertisers.

This invisible grip over our minds and bodies now empowers platform leaders to advance their political agenda and silence opposition.

The UK and the EU are trying to "regulate" these platforms. Yet, beneath the moral justifications, this is essentially a power struggle over the control of information, between state institutions and a challenging tech industry. Our voices shouldn't be silenced by either the hypocrite "neutrality" of old-school mass media, nor the addictive machinery of the digital age. We should fight back and build a third way, towards grassroots democratic control of technology - one that empowers social justice, mutual aid, and mutual listening.

COMMUNITIES NEED COMMUNITY CENTRES

Every community and neighbourhood needs local community-run centres and spaces in order to overcome isolation, fragmentation and powerlessness imposed by our oppressive and unfair 'top down' society. Such unique spaces help people to get together and feel part of their community, and to link up and empower themselves - by sharing feelings, news and ideas, learning useful skills, developing mutual aid, solidarity and ways of speaking up for their needs, and taking action to defend and extend their rights.

In Haringey there are a wide range of such Centres, some active for decades. They can be neighbourhood-based, or serve a particular section of the population. Some are huge, some tiny. Some have paid staff, but most rely on the hard work of volunteers. Many are in Council buildings. Most have rooms for hire enabling educational or well-being classes, support groups, advice sessions, private parties and public events, and various

kinds of community self-organisation, action and campaigning - which we need much more of everywhere! Some have cafés or food banks/ kitchens.



Keeping going

Managing such buildings takes a colossal effort, regarding finances, maintenance, lease arrangements, managing staff and volunteers, and basically keeping afloat. In recent years, those centres in Council-owned buildings have had to battle with the Council over recognition, rents, repairs and the right to stay there. The Haringey Community Centres Network (HCCN) builds solidarity among centres - around 35 currently in the network. Together we are now having some success

in negotiating for long leases, affordable rents offset by services provided, and the Council to repair its buildings.

Let's demand more spaces!

In the last year a Campaign for Community Spaces has grown up, demanding more such centres to address vital community needs. In reality we could do with hundreds more, in every neighbourhood, estate and main street.

HCCN

<https://lordshipub.org.uk/haringey-community-centres-network/>

WHO WE ARE

FIND OUT MORE AND GET INVOLVED

Visit: www.haringey.org.uk

Befriend us on Facebook

Write to:

PO Box 2474, London N8

Email: info@haringey.org.uk

In 1991, Haringey Solidarity Group (HSG) emerged from the Anti-Poll Tax campaign. We wanted to create a long-term, vibrant, non-hierarchical group, unlike political parties where ambitions and posturing displace real politics.

We believe in ridding ourselves of the current system which places profit and power before people's needs. This involves getting organised, fighting back and collectively

taking those decisions which affect our daily lives. We think people should take control of their community and workplace struggles, support each other, encourage practical solidarity, build the necessary skills and knowledge for these struggles and generate strong, permanent, grassroots networks.

Many of us are involved with local residents', community and campaign groups within the borough. We support workers

in dispute, campaigns against public service cuts and threatened community amenities. We are active on environmental, housing and claimants' issues and resist state controls.

Come and share your views at our monthly meeting. We welcome your involvement and with practical activities including distributing this newsletter and producing other materials including posters and leaflets.