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Prisons Must Focus on Rehabilitation to Cut Reoffending

Education, training and rehabilitation need to become the primary focus of jails, the chief inspector of prisons in England and Wales has said. Charlie Taylor told the BBC that a "fundamental reorientation" of the prison system was the only way to reduce reoffending. His intervention comes amid growing concern around overcrowding in jails. The government says its new Prisoner Education Service will improve outcomes for those being released from custody. But Mr Taylor suggested that jails were failing to reduce the risk of prisoners reoffending, and that many inmates were failing to learn to read. Others, he said, were taking part in courses which would not help them get jobs in future. He also argued that the high availability of drugs in some prisons was hindering rehabilitation efforts, as he called for immediate action to give prisoners the skills they need for life in the workplace.

The prison population of England and Wales - the area Mr Taylor is chief inspector for - is more than 87,000. Mr Taylor believes there is not enough space for prisoners to be provided with the activities they need for suitable rehabilitation. "It is now more essential than ever that prisons become places of rehabilitation, that we reduce the number of reoffences that take place, that we reduce the number of victims of crime. This will only happen if there is a fundamental reorientation of our prisons to become places of rehabilitation, of training and of education." Ahead of his appearance on Today, Mr Taylor told the BBC it was "vital that prisons become places of real purpose". "I am calling for a fundamental shift in the way that prisons are organised and run so that they become first and foremost places of rehabilitation and education," he explained. Mr Taylor also called for a "proper" debate over what prisons are trying to achieve, why people are imprisoned, what happens to inmates when they are locked up and what the public want prisoners to be like when they come out.

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said: "We know that prisoners who leave custody with a job to go to are less likely to reoffend. Reoffending rates have fallen from 31 to 24 per cent since 2010 and we are working to drive them down even further." The spokesperson also mentioned the Prisoner Education Service, a new scheme the government says will include more education staff in prisons, prisoner apprenticeships in catering and construction and more funds to improve reading and writing skills. "Our new Prisoner Education Service will improve prisoners' literacy and numeracy, our business-led Employment Advisory Boards ensure they develop skills employers need, and Prison Employment Leads match them to jobs on release." They also pointed to government statistics showing that the proportion of prisoners in work six months after release more than doubled in the two years to March 2023.

Palestinian Prisoners Fight Repression

John Bowden, FRFI: The machinery of repression that the Zionist state inflicts on the Palestinian people has always included arbitrary imprisonment. Alongside the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza since early October there has been a further increase in the already wide-scale detention of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, with nearly 1,700 arrests between 7 and 31 October. As FRFI goes to press, the sustained resistance in Gaza has resulted in 39 Palestinian women and children prisoners being released, with an agreement for Israel to release up to 150 in total in exchange for 50 people captured in Israel.

As of 1 November, the total number of imprisoned Palestinians stood at 6,809, including 170 children. Around one-fifth of the male Palestinian population has at one time or another been imprisoned. Unlike Israeli citizens, Palestinian prisoners are tried in military, rather than civilian, courts. Over 2,070 of these prisoners are held under Administrative Detention (AD) – a means for Israel to imprison Palestinians without charge or trial, and without even informing them of the reason for their imprisonment. Administrative Detention was originally introduced in Palestine by the British occupation in 1938, after a popular uprising known as The Great Revolt. Since the 1948 Zionist state was founded, over a million Palestinians have been imprisoned. AD orders are issued for up to six months at a time and are indefinitely renewable, with Palestinians routinely jailed for years under these orders.

Palestinian prisoners endure appalling treatment. Human rights groups have documented various forms of physical and psychological abuse: arbitrary beatings, excessive use of solitary confinement, the denial of family visits and a lack of access to legal advice. The UN has concluded that in some cases this constitutes torture. Children are not excluded from such treatment. Research published in July 2023 by Save the Children revealed that the majority of child prisoners experienced appalling levels of physical and emotional abuse, including being beaten (86%), threatened with harm (70%), hit with sticks or guns (60%), strip searched (69%), kept in solitary confinement for between one and 48 days (60%), deprived of access to healthcare (68%) and denied visits or communication with their families (58%).

The Zionist state uses prisons to liquidate and kill Palestinians but still the Palestinian prisoners fight back and their struggle is a core part of the wider struggle. On 17 August 2023, 1,000 political prisoners staged a hunger strike in protest against violent attacks by guards on prisoners in Negev prison. This act of solidarity across the system was successful and the regime conceded the prisoners' demands. In many ways, the prison experience and struggle of Palestinian activists in Israel mirrors that of Irish Republicans in the British occupied north of Ireland during the 1970s and 1980s. And, just as the struggle of the Irish political prisoners fuelled the wider anti-imperialist struggle in Republican communities, the courage of the Palestinian prisoners in resisting their inhumane treatment at the hands of the Zionist state continues to fuel the resistance of the wider Palestinian community.

Scrapping Short Jail Terms in England and Wales Puts Women at Risk

Daniel Boffey, Guardian: Abusive men in England and Wales will walk free from court under a new sentencing policy that flies in the face of ministers' claims to take domestic violence seriously, an independent government watchdog has said. Nicole Jacobs, the domestic abuse commissioner, said ministers had not done enough to protect women from a decision to lift the pressures on overcrowded prisons by scrapping short prison sentences. The government's sentencing bill puts a duty on judges to give suspended sentences where they may otherwise have given jail terms of 12 months or less. After advocacy groups raised concerns, an exemption was added in November in cases where convicted individuals had breached a court order or could be shown to pose a significant risk of causing psychological or physical harm to another person.

Speaking to the Guardian, Jacobs said this was inadequate and that the government's failure to respond to her call for a specific exemption for perpetrators of domestic abuse was putting women at risk. She claimed the probation service did not have the capacity to properly advise judges and magistrates on the dangers posed by perpetrators of domestic violence. A recent

recruitment drive for probation officers has increased numbers by 8.2% year on year. However, the service was lacking experience, Jacobs said, and the rehabilitation on offer to abusive men within the community was operating at full capacity. She said it was unacceptable that the minority of women who felt able to cooperate with an investigation all the way to conviction should be left exposed by the system. Last year, 6.8% of domestic abuse reports resulted in a charge. For sexual offences flagged as domestic abuse, the charge rate was even lower, at 3%.

Jacobs said: "It's not that I think that prison is the best idea for everyone. But it is not the case that someone who is in for a kind of low-level sentence is not a very dangerous person to the victim. What it has taken to get the victim to a point where that has actually happened, most of the time that will be relying on a statement by the victim. You know, four out of five won't ever report [domestic abuse] to the police. So when you take the one out of five who report to the police, and then you get to a fraction of them who actually get to the court, and if at that stage the court says: 'Oh, we'll give you a community sentence,' that really just flies in the face of this kind of rhetoric by the government that domestic abuse is serious, that it is as serious as terrorism, organised crime. That is such a mismatch."

According to the latest Ministry of Justice statistics, 11,040 men were jailed for about 12 months or less for harassment, stalking and "revenge porn" last year. There are concerns that a proportion of this number would not be imprisoned in the future. Jacobs said she had met the justice secretary, Alex Chalk, to make the point that a judge who wished to hand down a prison sentence to such men would be heavily reliant on the probation services to correctly identify the level of risk of a perpetrator causing psychological or physical harm. A full probation report is what it would take to have any confidence that the judge would be able to do that correctly," she said.

She added that for those given community service sentences, probation did have some rehabilitative perpetrator programmes but "they are very over-capacity. You'd really want some proper rehabilitation, proper oversight of that community order, proper understanding put to the judge, and that all hinges on functions within probation, which [is] fairly under-resourced. I've been told by probation themselves they've got this huge recruitment drive, they have got very new probation officers. Are we really at a point where we are equipped to do this properly? Because for domestic abuse that really matters." Jacobs said she was concerned that ministers had "cherry-picked" from the government-commissioned review by Clare Wade KC into a culture of misogyny in the criminal justice system. The review was prompted by poor conviction rates in rape cases and soft sentences for domestic homicides.

3,000 Offenders in England and Wales Wore Sobriety Tags this Christmas

Aletha Adu and Rowena Mason, Guardian: The number of offenders fitted with "sobriety tags" that can tell probation officers if they have been drinking and potentially land them back in jail has increased by more than 47% this Christmas compared with last year, government figures show. There were about 2,800 people in England and Wales wearing the tags this festive season compared with 1,900 last year after the government said it would increase use of the devices aimed at reducing alcohol-fuelled crime. Initial data shows that offenders fitted with the tags managed to stay sober 97% of the time on average. The devices can detect if an offender has been drinking by analysing their sweat. Government investment is aimed at nearly doubling the number of defendants on tags at any one time by 2025.

If an offender has had a drink an alert will be sent to the probation officer who can take action. The tags are so accurate they will not be triggered by foods that contain alcohol, but

alcoholic drinks will raise the alarm and offenders face being sent to prison. About 39% of all violent crime in the UK involves alcohol, including domestic abuse, which can rise during the festive period, figures provided by charities such as Women's Aid show.

The justice secretary, Alex Chalk KC, said: "The festive season is a time of celebration but a small minority can take it too far. We're keeping communities safe by tagging a record number of offenders this Christmas period. These innovative alcohol tags act as an important deterrent to offenders and come with a clear message: step out of line and you could end up behind bars." The devices are part of the government's £156m investment in tagging technology which means the UK has remained among the world leaders in the use of tags to fight crime and keep people safe.

The Troubles: Payments Proposed for Relatives of Those Killed

BBC News: Bereavement payments should be made to relatives of people killed during the Troubles, including those who were paramilitaries, it has been proposed. The suggestion is contained in an advice paper from the Commission for Victims and Survivors sent to the Executive Office at Stormont. If acted upon, about 13,000 people could benefit. No amount is suggested, but figures contained in the paper show the scheme could cost upwards of £130m. That would cover one-off payments of £10,000, which would apply regardless of the circumstances in which a person was killed. Awards of £50,000 would see the scheme requiring funding of almost £650m.

About 3,500 people were killed in the Troubles during more than 30 years of violence from the late 1960s onwards. In a foreword to the document, victims' commissioner Ian Jeffers states: "I have no doubt this paper will be contentious. There will be some who find it difficult to accept the idea that all bereaved families should be included, regardless of who their deceased loved one was. I fully understand this challenge, but I do see the value of a recognition payment to those suggested in this paper in promoting reconciliation."

The suggestion echoes an idea previously floated in 2009 by the Consultative Group on the Past, headed by Lord Eames and Denis Bradley. It proposed payments of £12,000. However, it was rejected by the government on the basis that it lacked support. In the paper, Mr Jeffers urges decision-makers to act "at pace", stating things cannot take the decade it took to implement a pension scheme for those badly injured during the Troubles. While not all will agree with the specifics of what we recommend, it can start a discussion around the acknowledgement of those bereaved as a result of the Troubles/conflict. The paper states it would be for politicians to ultimately decide upon "qualifying individuals". It goes on: "Beneficiaries should comprise: a spouse/partner, parent, child and siblings. Each should be entitled to the payment in their own right." It acknowledges "the availability of funding may be an obstacle" currently, but adds that stance is "unsustainable". "It's about acknowledgement"

Alan Brecknell, whose father was killed by loyalists at a bar in Silverbridge, County Armagh, in 1975, said: "It's far too late, we're 25 years on from the Good Friday Agreement, this is something that should have been dealt with at the time. "That said, it's never too late, I suppose. It's about acknowledgement for me at this stage. I'm quite lucky that I'm comfortable in my own life and so is the rest of my family, and so is my mother, but there are other people out there who aren't, who have never financially ever recovered from what happened to them." The commission has put forward the proposal as Mr Jeffers prepares to depart office. He is leaving to become the chief executive of peace-building charity Co-operation Ireland.

Rise in Assaults on Prison Staff Caused by Overcrowding & Low Staff Levels

Peter Walker, Guardian: A rise of 6% shows consequences of prisoner overcrowding and low staffing levels, say Liberal Democrats There were nearly 8,000 assaults on prison staff in the year to June 2023, almost one an hour on average, the Liberal Democrats have said, arguing that the statistic shows the consequences of prisoner overcrowding and low staffing levels. Official statistics showed there were 7,908 assaults over the 12 months in prisons across England and Wales – 6% higher than the same period a year before – with 748 of them classified as serious.

Analysis by the party shows the number of recorded assaults for every 1,000 prisoners has almost doubled in recent years, rising from 49 assaults in the year to June 2023 to 96 in the most recent figures. There have been significantly greater increases in such violence at individual prisons over that period, the statistics show. HMP Wakefield, a high-security facility in West Yorkshire that recorded seven assaults on staff in 2015, recorded 61 assaults in the first six months of 2023. HMP New Hall, a prison for women and young offenders that is also in West Yorkshire, recorded nine assaults in 2015, then 42 assaults in the first half of 2023. The equivalent figures for HMP Bedford, a category B prison, saw a rise from 22 to 82.

The prison population has been gradually rising in recent years. It is now at about 88,000 and is forecast to potentially exceed 100,000 in the next few years. The increase has been driven in part by longer sentences, but also by a steep rise in the number of people on remand, which is caused by delays in the courts system. By mid-2023, one in five prisoners were on remand, compared with one in nine in 2019. There are also notable shortages of staff. When a prisoner escaped from HMP Wandsworth in September, it emerged later that on the day he fled, 80 prison officers had not turned up for their shifts, leaving just 60% of posts filled. Earlier this year, a German court declined to extradite to the UK a man accused of drug trafficking because of concerns about prison conditions.

Alistair Carmichael, the Lib Dems' home affairs spokesperson, said: "No one should ever be assaulted in their workplace. Yet the Conservatives have left prisons overcrowded, under-staffed and unsafe, as these figures show. "Incidents like these will just further fuel the major issue of prison staff recruitment and retention. It's time for the justice secretary to get a grip and fix the crisis in our prisons. It's the only way to create a safe environment for both staff and offenders."

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said: "These figures show assaults on staff are down nearly a fifth on pre-pandemic levels as a result of our action to improve safety by boosting frontline staff and investing £100m security to crack down on violence. We have also doubled the maximum penalty for assaulting our hardworking prison officers to two years behind bars to ensure punishments fit the severity of the crime."

Government Doubles Down on Experimental Surveillance Tech to Track Migrants

'Constantly on Edge', the latest report on GPS tagging in immigration bail, has found that the Home Office has increased its use by 56% in the last year and is now using newer, experimental mobile fingerprint scanners to monitor migrants on bail, without effective safeguards in place. Users of the new 'non-fitted' scanner devices – supplied to the Ministry of Justice by Buddi under a £6 million contract - described the experience as a "type of torture" and spoke of feeling "constantly on edge". The research comes a year after Public Law Project, Bail for Immigration Detainees, and Medical Justice published 'Every move you make' which revealed the 'psychological torture' caused by fitted GPS tracking devices. Interviewees told researchers that the newer, non-fitted devices vibrate up to 10 times a day at random intervals, sometimes into the evening. If users are unable to scan their finger within a window of 'around a minute', they are considered to be in breach

of their electronic monitoring bail condition. That breach is then reviewed by the Home Office. Researchers found that an automated system – the Electronic Monitoring Review Tool (EMRT) – is used to decide which device type will be issued and for how long the person will be required to use it. Authors Dr Jo Hynes and Mia Leslie of the Public Law Project say there is not enough transparency around how the EMRT works to be sure that the process is free of bias.

The report found that reviews of decisions to impose GPS devices - a key safeguard in the process - are not being conducted in sufficient volumes. As of July 2023, 622 quarterly reviews were overdue. Author of the report Dr Jo Hynes said: "These devices are utterly dehumanising. It is hard to imagine the vigilance required to be ready to scan your finger immediately at random times throughout the day, or risk breaching your bail conditions. Our interviews with migrants show how oppressive this system is and the impact that constant watchfulness has on their daily lives and well-being. This level of surveillance is not only harmful, it is unnecessary.

The rate of absconding from immigration bail is tiny. In 2021 it was 2.7% and in the first six months of 2022 it was 1.3%. Millions are being spent on a system to address a problem that is not evidenced, and which causes psychological harm to people already made very vulnerable by Home Office policies. With a pilot study having recently concluded, it seems likely that Government may look at rolling these devices out to people who arrive by 'irregular' means i.e. by small boat. Given what we know about the potential harm these devices can cause, such a move would be highly inappropriate. The systems around this surveillance regime are opaque and dysfunctional. There is limited transparency around the automated decision support tool used to decide which device type will be issued and for how long the person will be on it. In addition, in breach of its own guidelines, the Home Office has a significant backlog of reviews to complete, leaving many at risk."

Inadequate Investigation Into Near-Fatal Use of Force by Police Officer

Ritchie J handed down judgment in R (Dunne) v IOPC & Officer TP7 [2023] EWHC 3300 (Admin), a judicial review claim arising from the use of near-fatal force against Francis Dunne by TP7 (a police firearms officer). Francis was with left permanent, incapacitating brain injury after being deliberately struck to the head with the muzzle of TP7's firearm on 10 May 2021. Body Worn Video (BWV) footage shows the strike to the head. Francis was also struck repeatedly by TP7 and other officers, as well as being tasered. The use of force took place after Francis ran away from officers seeking to apprehend him. Francis had no firearm or other weapon on him, or in his car.

The IOPC investigated a number of complaints made by Francis' family. The investigation was not subject to special procedures, no disclosure was provided to the family during the investigation (including of the BWV), TP7 and other officers were not interviewed, and only uninformative updates were provided to the family during the investigation. At the conclusion of the investigation, the IOPC did not provide their report to the family prior to decisions being made on possible criminal prosecution and/or misconduct proceedings (the decisions were negative on all fronts), and the IOPC published only an anonymised, one page summary of the investigation on its website.

The Claimants – Francis, acting through his mother and litigation friend; and his mother – challenged the IOPC's investigation and decisions. They argued that it breached the procedural duties under Articles 2 and 3 ECHR in numerous respects, including because: The family were not provided with sufficient disclosure to enable them to effectively participate in the investigation, including by making informed representations; The investigation was inadequate, including because relevant officers were not interviewed; The report should have been disclosed to the family before the IOPC made its decisions; The analysis in the final report was inadequate in multiple respects, including

because it failed properly to analyse the operation leading to the near-fatal use of force and because the assessment of the justification for the use of force was deficient; and Articles 2 and 3 ECHR required the IOPC to publish the final report. The IOPC maintained at trial that the Article 2 ECHR procedural duty did not apply and that the Article 3 ECHR procedural duty required only that a fulsome summary of the report be published (not the report itself). They further argued that Article 3 ECHR did not require that the officers be interviewed and did not require disclosure of the report to the family prior to its decisions being made. The Judge accepted the Claimants' submissions, found that the IOPC had breached the Article 2 and 3 ECHR procedural duties in multiple respects, and quashed the Defendant's report and final decisions.

Meet the Outlaw Escaping From Prisons In Protest Against Indefinite Detention

Helen Pidd, *Guardian*: It should be impossible to escape from a high-security prison, doubly so for prisoners held on the segregation unit, who are allowed only to exercise in a caged yard. But on 21 June, the summer solstice and the hottest day of the year at that point, Joe Outlaw managed to break through the cage and get on to the roof of HMP Frankland, a Durham prison dubbed "Monster mansion" due to many of its inmates being convicted murderers, terrorists and sex offenders. A local photographer captured Outlaw sunbathing in his underpants as he negotiated with prison officers from the National Tactical Response Group. Some social media users may have recognised Outlaw from TikTok and YouTube, where he used to post protest raps and songs from his cell.

It was a huge embarrassment for the prison service, particularly as Outlaw was on the e-list (escape list) at the time. He shed the yellow and blue jumpsuit that indicates a flight risk only when he breached the cage, prompting huge cheers from the prisoners below. It was not Outlaw's first rooftop rodeo. An expert climber since his youth, when he escaped from numerous care homes, in April this year he managed to get on to the roof at HMP Manchester, better known as Strangeways, by sneaking off from the healthcare unit and crawling through reels of barbed wire. For 12 soggy hours he sat up there in the driving rain to highlight the plight of prisoners in Wales and England, like himself, who are stuck in jail after being given imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentences with no automatic date for release.

Outlaw, now 37, was given an IPP in 2011 after robbing his local takeaway with an imitation firearm while high on drugs. The IPP was imposed, he says, because he already had two firearms offences on his record – including one committed while a juvenile, when he fired a pellet gun in a public park. He knows his crime was serious. "I didn't hurt him physically, but anyone pointing a gun at anyone is traumatising, and I don't know what it's done to [the takeaway worker's] life. I've got to take responsibility for that, and I am sorry for that," he told the *Guardian* in one of a series of letters. Outlaw – then going by the name Chris Hordosi, which he changed to Outlaw, his mother's maiden name, while in prison – was given an IPP with an 18-year tariff, reduced to nine on appeal. Without the IPP element, he would have been eligible for automatic release after four and a half years.

Yet 12 years later, he is still in prison, fighting against a system he thinks is rigged to make release all but impossible. He believes the lack of hope has killed other IPPs – 270 so far have died in prison, with 81 taking their own lives. Outlaw says he has tried to kill himself at least once, by setting fire to his cell – which ultimately resulted in an extra conviction for arson. He claims other IPPs have ended up committing murder in prison, figuring out they are basically in for life anyway. After his rooftop protest at Frankland, Outlaw was transferred to HMP Belmarsh, a Category A jail in London that holds some of the most dangerous prisoners in England and Wales.

He claims that since 23 June he has been forced to live in "total isolation" on a special

unit opened just for him. "I haven't heard or seen another inmate in almost six months so far. This is not because I'm violent or a danger to anyone. In 13 years I've never assaulted a member of staff and I have only had one fight with an inmate [a paedophile in HMP Wakefield]. I have been totally isolated simply because I spoke out in protest against the ongoing illegal imprisonment of IPPs ... and to silence my voice and activism," he said. He says he carried out his second rooftop protest at Frankland after suffering "horrid levels of abuse and neglect" there. The alternative was suicide, he said: "If I would have not taken that chance to do what I did there I would have ended up hanging myself, I swear to god."

He hid strips of ripped-up bed sheets in his trainers, which he then used to tie himself to the exercise yard cage, while hanging upside down. He then managed to break the cage before he crawled through and on to the roof. "The most shocking thing was that I was in an e-list blue and yellow escape suit at the time, and just six weeks before, I had been on Manchester's roof," he said, describing it as "a new level of embarrassment for the Prison Service", which "begs the question: what if this was a mass murderer or a millionaire drug dealer with a chopper?" Outlaw knows many people may read of his escapades and think: "Joey, no wonder you are not getting out." But he insists that many far better behaved IPP prisoners are stuck. "Lads have been sweet as a nut, managed to dodge all the war zones, do all the bullshit courses and they still come up with some reason to keep them in," he wrote.

Claims he was originally told "all I had to do was keep my head down, behave and do my [rehabilitation] courses and I'd be back out in no time". But in reality, he says, "every time lads would complete a course, a new one would be created and the goalposts moved again." The Parole Board is inherently risk-averse when it comes to IPPs, he says. "They treat people that are in for fights or robbery like they are murderers."

Prisons are corrupt, insists Outlaw. He claims to have watched drones deliver drugs to HMP Manchester every night, and "found myself just smoking weed, sniffing coke, taking Xanax – it was mental, everybody was just on a party mode constantly". Officers turned a blind eye to rampant smartphone use, he claims, to the point that he started TikTok and YouTube channels to showcase his jailhouse songs, one of which, he claims, gathered more than 150,000 views in three days. He wants readers to put themselves in his shoes when viewing his protests. "What would you do when the people who are meant to be helping you are the ones who are abusing you, when no one around you cares or treats you with respect? There's people who become your captors who are torturing you on a daily basis ... How can you expect a person to change his ways for the better when treated with such disregard?" - Joe Outlaw is one of 2,921 inmates still on IPP sentences, which were abolished in 2012

People Directly Impacted by Incarceration Must Mobilize Globally

Victoria Law & Erica R. Meiners, Truthout: In 1992, formerly incarcerated women created 'Sisters Inside' to advocate for the rights of women and girls behind bars in Queensland, Australia. While other grassroots groups and ad hoc campaigns had formed to work with incarcerated women, Sisters Inside remains the country's first organization founded and run by formerly incarcerated women. Over the last 31 years, the organization has provided legal and logistical support to currently and formerly incarcerated women and pushed to end policies that cage people, such as imprisoning people for nonpayment of fines.

In November, Sisters Inside held its 10th conference, inviting organizers from across Australia and overseas to brainstorm and strategize under the theme "Abolition Feminism Now." Both

of us flew in from the United States, where mainstream media hypes every individual act of violence as part of a so-called surge of crime. In recent years, anti-prison organizing, and even mild reforms, have faced a well-funded backlash, particularly after nationwide uprisings and organizing efforts to defund the police in 2020. Being surrounded by both veteran organizers and those new to anti-prison organizing was the reinvigoration we hadn't known that we needed.

In Brisbane, surrounded by lizards, loud birds and warm spring sunshine, hundreds of people gathered for three days of plenary sessions, workshops and tabling to connect and learn about organizing. The breadth and depth of the workshops reminded us that issues are intertwined — that ending the family policing system, borders and prisons must go hand in hand with developing meaningful and non-carceral responses to gender and sexual harm, and that ending gender and sexual harm requires challenging the false beliefs that borders and police make us safer.

Here are 10 things that fired us up during our time in Brisbane — and beyond. They reminded us that not only can we build a world in which people thrive, but that organizers are doing so daily.

Grassroots Networks Are Crucial!: Small projects and networks are practicing abolition. In Melbourne, Flat Out celebrated its 35th year of supporting people both during their incarceration and after release. The group not only provides necessities, such as menstrual supplies, clothing and food that people desperately need after being released from prison, it also fights against the rising criminalization of women with its active campaign to stop the expansion of a women's prison in the state of Victoria. In Aotearoa (New Zealand), People Against Prisons Aotearoa (PAPA) began as an ad hoc protest against police marching in a 2015 Pride parade. The group started working with queer people behind bars before expanding its support to all people in prisons, regardless of sexual and gender identity. Like many other abolition feminist organizations, Flat Out and PAPA deepen public dialogues about abolition and feminism, through panels, posters, and other forms of critical community-based political education. The work is often labor-intensive and frequently run on a shoestring budget, but it also builds community. Each year, PAPA brings together people from all walks of life — from residents of a neighborhood nursing home to younger anarchists — to write holiday cards to incarcerated people.

Directly Impacted People are the Core of These Movements: The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, originally formed in the United States, has expanded to incubate the International Network of Formerly Incarcerated Women. Under the demand “Free her!” they are mobilizing to free women from jails and prisons and advocating to end the long-standing injustices, such as poverty, criminalization and racism, that push women into prison. In some U.S. cities, recognizing that poverty is a direct pathway to prison, groups have organized pilot programs providing guaranteed income payments. In Massachusetts, currently and formerly incarcerated people are demanding a five-year moratorium on all jail and prison construction or expansion and that those funds instead be channeled into resources enabling people to flourish.

The conference highlighted organizing spearheaded by formerly incarcerated women, both in Australia and overseas. In 2020, Sisters Inside Founder and Director Debbie Kilroy created the National Network of Incarcerated & Formerly Incarcerated Women & Girls, bringing together women, girls, feminine identifying and nonbinary people from across Australia to end incarceration. Kilroy closed the conference with the powerful reminder: Nothing about us without us.

Organizing Spans Generations: Lilla Watson, an Aboriginal octogenarian, artist and academic, recalled visiting the United States in the early 1970s, where she marched to free Angela Davis, who had been jailed on highly politicized murder charges. After a worldwide freedom campaign

and a much-publicized trial, Davis was freed and became an international inspiration for generations of abolitionists. Half a century later, Davis sat in the audience while Watson recalled this connection. Organizers born years, and even decades, after Davis's well-publicized legal victory continue the fight to end criminalization and incarceration. In North Queensland, near Australia's famous Great Barrier Reef, organizers launched the End Toxic Prisons campaign to stop the construction of two new youth prisons. Instead of pushing to raise the age of criminal responsibility, the campaign, guided by young First Nations people, counters media misinformation about youth crime and galvanizes local opposition to incarcerating young people at all.

We Need to Reach Across — and Dismantle — Borders: The U.S. continues to export its mass incarceration model across the globe. States in Australia are building new prisons based not on the Scandinavian models that are increasingly popular among prison administrators and politicians (and often touted as more humanitarian), but on the U.S. model of supermax prisons. The imprint of the prison built for the “worst of the worst” was clearly visible in our visit to the austere Southern Queensland Correctional Centre, where 300 women were warehoused in newly built concrete, cyclone fencing and coils of razor wire more than 100 kilometers outside of Brisbane. As in prisons across the globe, many were already survivors of gender and sexual harm before arrest and, behind bars, are continually retraumatized by dehumanizing practices, such as routine strip searches.

The State Cannot Fix the Problems It Creates: Inquests are judicial inquiries to determine the circumstances and cause of a sudden death. In Australia, where inquests are mandatory for deaths in custody, the coroner conducts the process, which includes calling and questioning witnesses. For years, family members whose loved ones have died in police custody or while incarcerated often leave these hearings without answers, closure or accountability. Latoya Rule, whose brother Wayne Morrison died after police restrained him and put a spit hood over his head, noted that inquests do not prevent future deaths, result in more transparency for loved ones or compel accountability from police. Their family waited five years for an inquest into Morrison's death only to see prison guard after prison guard refuse to answer questions. They remain no closer to learning what happened in his final moments. Still, mobilizations led by loved ones have procured some wins, such as the decriminalization of “public drunkenness” and the banning of spit hoods, tactics that have long been used to criminalize and kill Aboriginal people.

New Technology Is Not a Win: Queensland's new prisons employ some of the latest technologies, including digital fingerprinting for visitors and, for those behind bars, “smart” toilets that restrict the number of flushes per day. These new technologies provide no opportunities for rehabilitation or transformation. Instead, they give the perception of modernized facilities, deepen surveillance and allow more public funds to be poured into incarceration rather than social safety nets. In Canada, several prisons now utilize body scanners, allegedly to detect contraband. Yet these scanners have not replaced prisons' dehumanizing strip searches. Not only are the scanners used in addition to these retraumatizing practices, officers, unable to accurately read these scans, have misidentified body organs as drugs and sent people to solitary confinement as a result of these errors.

We Must Name and Recognize Our Wins: In 2019, lawmakers in Aotearoa (New Zealand) sought to arm police with guns in response to the shooting in Christchurch. At that point, police officers did not carry guns, but kept them locked in their cars. When police enacted a trial period for armed response teams, PAPA organized its Arms Down Campaign. With art created from people's stories of police violence, PAPA graphically illustrated the dangers of even non-militarized policing, particularly against Māori and Pasifika communities. They urged New

Zealanders to call police and public officials in opposition to the measure. The campaign only gained real traction in 2020 when footage of U.S. police murdering George Floyd flooded news and social media feeds worldwide, allowing New Zealanders to see the dangers inherent in policing. Although the trial period had ended by then, police officials had scheduled a review and decision on permanently implementing armed police for June 2020. Bowing to public pressure, they scrapped the plan altogether. In Australia, family members have fought to end policies that have killed their loved ones. April Day's mother Tanya died in jail after police arrested her under its public intoxication law. Recognizing that the law allowed police to disproportionately target Aboriginal people, Day and other family members fought for years to decriminalize public drunkenness in Victoria. The law went into effect on Melbourne Cup Day, long known as the day when many white Australians are drunk in public without being arrested or even harassed by police.

Sometimes When We Fight, We Don't Win: Not all organizing results in victory. In 2020, Aotearoa held a referendum to legalize marijuana for personal recreation. PAPA members mobilized in support. The ongoing pandemic prevented in-person organizing and conversations, so the campaign pivoted to "letter boxing," or putting informational brochures in mailboxes. It was a mighty task for a small, grassroots group, but they connected with people across the country to ensure the widest possible reach. Still, the referendum failed to pass with only 48.4 percent voting in favor of legalization. But even losses can provide us with valuable insights on what to do next time. They can also forge new starting places and connections for future campaigns and actions.

Movement Assessment Is Critical. So Is Joy: As two people who have attended a number of conferences over the past few decades, we know that bringing people together can be chaotic, tiring and fraught with conflict. Yet it remains crucial to movement building. Sharing both space and experiences raises critical questions while also deepening analyses and coalitions. Coming together, we strengthen connections between seemingly disparate campaigns, time periods and regions. In a video clip, Erin Miles Cloud, a co-founder of the U.S.-based Movement for Family Power described how the U.S. child welfare system is actually a family policing system that punishes rather than helps vulnerable families. Her message resonated with an audience still reeling from the intergenerational traumas and devastation wrought by the Stolen Generations, a century-long government policy in which Aboriginal children were taken from their families. Beyond sharpening our analysis, convenings also have the power to cultivate community and joy. From the sizzling poetry of Lorna Munro, to the smart and rollicking performance and music of Hot Brown Honey, to the fierceness of rapper Barkaa, art, music, poetry and dancing show us that abolition feminism isn't just necessary — it's also sexy and fun.

Prison Legal Advice Survey Finds Shockingly Low Levels of Legal Representation

Bail for Immigration Detainees: Our newest prison legal advice survey shows the barriers to accessing immigration legal advice whilst being detained in Prisons. The report has found that lack of legal representation continues to be high, with 75% of respondents not having legal representation for their immigration case. Access to timely immigration advice is vital for individuals held under immigration powers in prisons, as it can help challenge deportation orders.

The introduction of the 2022 Nationality and Borders Bill and the 2023 Illegal Migration Act has ensured that the stakes of access to immigration legal advice for people detained in prisons have never been higher. The research adds to the large body of criticism from expert bodies, independent inspectorates and international human rights organisations that have criticised the use of prisons, which after all, are designed for the purpose of punishment and

not for the purely administrative reasons which is the purpose of immigration powers authorising the use of detention. Individuals serving custodial sentences in prison often describe counting down the days until their release date. However, for people considered 'Foreign National Offenders' (FNOs), they continue to be detained after their custodial release date under immigration powers - after which they invariably count the days up from when they should have been released. FNOs detained under immigration powers either remain in prison or are moved to Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) pending deportation. Access to timely immigration advice is vital for individuals held under immigration powers in prisons. While the UK Borders Act 2007 introduced automatic deportation orders, the Immigration Act 2014 increased the likelihood that many people born and raised in the UK with no or limited ties to their country of nationality with a partner, family and communities in the UK, face deportation. Research undertaken by BID2 and academics demonstrates that deportation has a "potentially catastrophic effect on the whole family, including children and British citizens."

Urgent government action is also needed to cease using prisons for immigration detention. While BID opposes the use of immigration detention in its entirety, if it must be used it, it should only apply in IRCs (that are intended not to involve a punitive regime) where the DDAS operates. Individuals detained under immigration powers in prisons should preferably be released to their communities where they would have better access to justice than in prison and where they can receive meaningful supervision by the Probation Service while their Licences apply.

End Death by Incarceration - Free Mumia Now!

Grace Kress FRFI: Mumia Abu Jamal, an award-winning author, journalist and political prisoner has been behind bars for 42 years. Known as the voice of the voiceless, he was framed for killing a policeman in 1981 in a trial drenched in racism. His real 'crime' is being unwaveringly outspoken against the oppressive capitalist system and imperialism. In Philadelphia, where Mumia is incarcerated, black people are detained at a rate nine times higher than white residents. Mumia was originally given a death sentence; in 2011 this was commuted to a life sentence without parole. Even off death row, his life remains in the balance with deteriorating chronic health issues and inadequate health care provisions.

Mumia's case is tragically not unique and there are many political prisoners who remain behind bars after decades of imprisonment across the US, including Leonard Peltier, the US's longest term indigenous political prisoner, who has been incarcerated for 47 years. Many of them were locked up because of their involvement with the Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army in the 1960s and 1970s. The US state has never forgiven them for their revolutionary activism and continues to use them as an example to deter others from following their lead. Mumia talks about these indefinite sentences as a slow death sentence and campaigners are now referring to them as 'death by incarceration'.

In the last three years several prominent US political prisoners have died within months of being released. The state claims they were granted compassionate release, but there is nothing compassionate about keeping elders in inhumane conditions only for them to die shortly after they finally see freedom. Prison has long been used as a tool to suppress radical politics, to control those brave enough to call out injustice and quell uprisings. Criminalising revolutionaries is deliberately aimed at attacking and discrediting their ideas and ostracising them from the rest of society. We must fight to end death by incarceration and to liberate all political prisoners. In fighting for Mumia, we fight for our own liberation.