

Planning Meeting for Direct Action Against Deportation

When: Saturday 16 August, 1.30 - 3.30 pm

Where: Upstairs at Cinema Paradiso, 164 James Street, Northbridge.

Who: Everyone with ideas for, and interest in using a diversity of direct action tactics against forcible deportations.

Why: To generate, discuss and plan direct action strategies against forced deportations of Asylum Seekers through Perth.

Background

In March 2003, the Australian Department of Immigration started intimidating Asylum Seekers from Iran to sign repatriation papers, or be deported within 28 days against their consent. Overt and brutal intimidation and threats are made by ACM/DIMIA and the Immigration Minister to deport Asylum Seekers in detention centres as well as those on Temporary Protection Visas (TPV).

Two weeks ago a last minute injunction from the Federal Court has prevented the deportation of Mourad Beladjine to Algeria. Mourad was taken off the plane only 20 minutes before it was scheduled to depart from Perth airport.

One week ago Zahirul Islam made a telephone call from the transit lounge at Perth airport half an hour before he was to be put on a flight to Bangladesh against his wishes. Zahirul was known to anti-deportation campaigners but initiating legal processes took too long and Zahirul was deported.

An effective campaign against deportations involves: building links and community with those at risk of deportation; awareness raising of the dehumanising and dangerous outcomes for people being deported; lobbying of airlines, medical workers and trade unions who may be able to play a role stopping deportations; and liaison with those using legal expertise to stop deportations. *One important part of the campaign is planning direct action against specific attempts at deporting people through Perth.*

In Perth we face a range of practical problems in employing effective direct action tactics. We urgently need some creative solutions to these problems. We also need careful planning, and effective communication.

The National Anti-Deportation Alliance

In response to the urgent deportation crisis the National Anti-Deportation Alliance (NADA) was established after discussion between representatives of refugee advocacy, support and action groups from around Australia.

NADA has implemented procedures for responding to attempts to forcibly deport Asylum Seekers. Central to these are an Anti-Deportation Hotline and Database of People at Risk of Deportation. For more information visit the NADA resources page at <http://www.safecom.org/nada1.htm>.

Proposed Agenda

- Introductions
- Brainstorm ideas for direct action
- Organise ideas and, in groups, determine which are most likely to be effective, and for each of those, which questions (legal, ethical, logistical) need to be addressed, what resources are needed, what preparation is required, and for what conditions would the idea be effective.
- Establish how deportation information and action alerts will be communicated in Perth.
- Schedule follow up meeting(s) if necessary

The role of direct action

Direct action is not likely to stop a deportation. It is still important for a number of reasons, the most important of which is arguably to *delay* a deportation attempt until other resources can be mobilised or legal applications made. The right tactics will also raise awareness of the policy and methods of deportation. All the while we slow down the process of deporting Asylum Seekers by making it more for the agencies and companies involved.

The phrase "direct action" has been applied to a huge variety of activities, and getting on and doing it is much more important than worrying about a definition. Briefly, direct action implies acting yourself, in a way that directly addresses the problem which you're confronting. Direct action also implies rejection of the procedures and rules of the agencies that seek to deport people, and having the initiative to decide for yourself what is right and what needs to be resisted.

Deciding what is and isn't appropriate for the broader campaign may take debate, argument and broad consensus. But the main benefits of this sort of discussion is that people with different backgrounds can contribute a variety of ideas, learn from one another, and that direct action tactics can be used in the campaign as and when required, rather than being artificially separate. It's a big mistake to assume that the spontaneity, passion and daring of good direct action should only be used in a limited section of the campaign, or only by a "special" group of activists.

Past experience has shown that simple things like a passenger refusing to take their seat can be effective. Leafleting and canvassing flight crew and passengers before they board an aircraft to be used for deportation might then be all we need to do, but any other idea should be considered, and all ideas require some planning to work.