

# The Broken Rifle #107:

# Prisoners for peace, prisons of war?

## Editorial

Every year on 1st December War Resisters' International and its members mark Prisoners for Peace Day, when we publicise the names and stories of those imprisoned for their actions for peace. Many are conscientious objectors, in jail for refusing to join the military. Others have taken nonviolent actions to disrupt preparation for war. Supporters send cards and letters in solidarity. This year, there were also solidarity actions with three conscientious objectors in prison in Israel.

In this edition of The Broken Rifle, we share some reflections on the experience of people who have been imprisoned for taking actions against militarism. This includes Lee Sangmin, who has appeared on our Prisoners for Peace list, and received messages of solidarity from around the world. We also include piece by Paul Magno on the experience of supporting the Transform Now Plowshares three, when they were imprisoned. Finally – in a good news story – there is an article on the campaign to free Oscar López Rivera, a political prisoner just released from jail after thirty five years of incarceration.

Prisons are sites of violence and social control - not just for those imprisoned for nonviolent political actions, but for all. The prison-industrial complex is intrinsically linked with a militarised approach to security, in which faith is put in the idea that you can 'put a lid' on perceived threats by containing them through force and the threat of it. A horribly good example of this is the experience of Palestinians in prison in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

There is money to be made in the dehumanising, uniformity of prisons, and – like other forms of militarism - mercenaries are ready to make a profit. In Facing Tear Gas YaliniDream calls out the systematic use of tear gas, pepper spray or other chemical agents in US prisons.

Antimilitarism holds that a vision of security based on surveillance, unequal power relations and a monopoly of violence is counterproductive and inhumane. This can be as true of prisons as it is of armies.

Hannah Brock

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**The Broken Rifle 107: Prisoners for peace, prisons of war?**





# Lee Sangmin

## Something that happened, what's left, and what's to come

Sometimes I dream about the past. Usually, I don't dream about positive experiences, just days I regret and memories I want to run away from. Memories remain an unconscious pressure, and come to me often in my dreams. It smells like a scent of dirt just before raining. I also dream about the future that never came. In the worst case scenario, the very situations I want to avoid appear in my dreams. I always breathe a sigh when I wake up, and I'm glad they didn't happen to me in real life.

What is the worst thing that can happen to me while in prison? For prisoners, the most anticipated thing is being released. I believe that most prisoners hope to get an early release through parole, by being a model prisoner. In a horrible place where I cannot even open the door, I cannot get out of the day and see the outside air and the landscape beyond 4 meters of the wall, sharing love with my beloved, smiling with my friends and family. I feel my heart beating so fast by imagining these things. At the same time, it is frustrating that this reality, these good things, are not available to me right now. If the scheduled parole is cancelled, it will be a terrible thing. Only three months left I have to spend. But those short days keep dragging on.

During life in prison, I became cautious about people. People make me joyful sometimes, but also make me feel difficult. If someone had trouble with a cell-mate or a workshop mate, this means another prison life whilst in prison. A hell of a prison life will turn into more hell. Unfortunately, I did not have a good relationship technique to prevent disagreements with people. I have a straight-forward personality and rarely compromise. 'No' means 'no' and I couldn't like the things I don't like. I never do something I disagree with. The culture of

'Single-gender' in prison, which is made up of men only, creates a strong hierarchical order. It's really hard to refuse the works of a person who is higher than me. That is why it was so difficult. I can be a mere victim of the order in prison. But making me a perpetrator is hard to do and if someone forces me to become a perpetrator, I can't even pretend. When my rank went up in prison, I don't know what to do when I ordered to 'manage' the new cell-mates.

I had to worry about the rest of my life when I was released. I became an ex-convict, and I had few choices. As a quote of "Life goes on", conscientious objection was not an end of my life. It seemed to me that the conscientious objection was a big mountain for me and I didn't think of the big mountain named life behind it. I loved bicycles so I started the bike repair. I got a job at a bicycle store and started work. I had a talent and skills, so employer noticed me as a good worker. I could make a lot of sales in a short period, and I could leave to another workshop with a better condition. But I was always afraid to reveal my past. I couldn't build relationships via social media with my co-workers. I had to think about how to explain the blank space in my life lasting more than a year. I have to be ready to make inventive answers to the question "why you didn't served in military". I was always wary of getting closer to people beyond a certain point. I refused military service based on my conscience, but I was not conscious of my conscience. I was not ashamed of myself, but I had to be ashamed. So I had to lock myself up and protect me.

I still think deeply about people. I remember a lot of moments when I was in trouble because of my cell-mates. How to understand people still remains as a long-standing conundrum.

There still remains a 'before, during, and after' my prison days. In many cases, this conundrum motivates me to live my life, giving me a break to think about a person who hurt me. It is really easy to spit and turn your head on a person that you do not like. But it is really difficult to try to understand and communicate with someone that you do not like. The habit of thinking deeply about people seems to be a great driving force for me. I watched a movie when I was in prison. That film told me that if I understood a person, then I will love them finally. Including myself. I want to understand a lot of things, and I want to be positive, and I want to love. I do not want to take away hopes and possibilities in any difficult moments. I believe this is love. I believe that all these struggles are the gestures of

love.

If nothing else happens, I will live 60 more years. I want all my efforts to be completed in the rest of my life. Everything that passed was love for me. I hope I can do so in the future.#

*Translated by Akhee Ahn*

*Sangmin is a conscientious objector, based on his Christian beliefs and his pacifism. He is the first objector in Korean Mennonite community so far. He got arrested in April 2014 and was released in July 2015. He works at the bicycle shop at the moment.*



**THEY REFUSE TO SERVE THE OCCUPATION, WILL YOU REFUSE TO ARM IT?**

## Photo essay: International day of action in solidarity with Israeli refusers in prison #refuse2occupy

Vigils took place outside arms manufacturing facilities and other locations calling on governments to stop arming the Israeli occupation rather than profiting from it. The day of action highlighted that as young people in Israel are refusing to serve the occupation, we should refuse to profit from it. Because as long as Europe trades with the Israeli weapon

industry - the occupation will continue. As long as the US continue to arm Israel and buy its weapons - young Israelis will continue to be imprisoned for refusing to aim these weapons toward civilians.

Organiser Oren Rimon, from the Mesarvot network, said:

'Tamar and Tamar were visited in prison yesterday and were really excited to see the photos of the different actions. One of the difficulties in refusing military conscription here, is the feeling of isolation and criticism from Israeli society. International solidarity is one of the things that helps to remind the imprisoned refusers of the significance of their stance against the occupation, and encourages them to persist with it.

In organising this campaign, we hoped for the actions to show solidarity with the refusers, as well as be relevant locally. Drawing the lines between local and international forms of direct action against the occupation, in Israel - refusing military service, and internationally - refusing to arm the Israeli occupation'.

Here are photos of some of the actions that took place.



Outside the office of arms manufacturers Lockheed Martin, London



Action by conscientious objectors in Helsinki, Finland



Conscientious objectors in Nicosia, Cyprus



Outside the White House, Washington, USA



Yorkshire CND outside Teledyne Defence in Yorkshire, UK



*Outside the European Parliament, Brussels*



*A stall in Paris*

# Facing Tear Gas: Chemical Weapons Abuse in US Prisons

*A longer version of this article was first published on TruthOut.org - thanks to Sarah Robinson for abridging*

Multiple letters from Mount Olive Correctional Complex (MOCC) in West Virginia, report at least 5-7 imprisoned people are sprayed by tear gas, pepper spray or other chemical agents each week. First-hand testimonies refer to the guards' lax references to the frequent use of these chemicals as "bug spray."

One person reports getting sprayed after kicking a door and breaking a window because guards ignored his emergency call button. He had not received his diabetic snack bag, which he had been requesting for four hours. In a letter he writes to the War Resisters League he describes that, "I have severe hypoglycemia at nighttime which can result in my death... they opened the beanhole and used a canister of OC [oleoresin capsicum gas] spray on my stomach and testicles intentionally!" OC spray, commonly referred to as pepper spray, is derived from capsaicin, the active ingredient in chili peppers. According to his letter, the spray dispersed to the top tier of the ventilation system impacting at least seven others imprisoned in the MOCC.

Another person living inside MOCC was sprayed after suffering severe symptoms of paranoia. He writes that he was diagnosed with Schizophrenia, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental illnesses prior to incarceration. On October 1st 2012, when he began having a paranoia-induced anxiety attack, others housed in his area pushed the emergency call button. While he was hallucinating and building a web with sheets that he tore, he was not hostile to anyone or posing a threat. He writes of guards opening the food slot to deploy a 12 oz canister of Phantom -- an OC spray manufactured by Sabre

Red Security Equipment Corporation. Shortly after, another 12 oz canister was deployed. Ten minutes after, a 6 oz canister was deployed. Later, a 9 oz canister of Clearout was sprayed -- a brand of aerosol grenade containing both OC and CS [orthochlorobenzalmalononitrile] gasses made by Aerko International. CS gas (named after B.B. Corson and R.W. Stoughton, the American scientists who discovered it) is a tear gas whose fine white powder contains several cyanide functional groups that was developed at Britain's secretive military science park Porton Down. Each time a canister was deployed, the food slot was shut, enclosing the cell. He and another person who witnessed the incident both wrote that they believe the guards intended to kill him.

Another letter describes another incarcerated man getting sprayed for speaking out on behalf of two people who requested mental health support but instead were tear gassed. The water supply had been cut off in his unit. He was already experiencing irritation in his eyes and throat from the two other men being excessively sprayed less than an hour before. He advocated for those who had already been sprayed and expressed to the guards that they had no right to shut off the water. He writes that shortly after a rod was placed under his door, and he was sprayed for 5-7 seconds through the bean hole. With nothing to alleviate the pain, he splashed toilet water on his skin. He was left in the enclosed cell for 40-50 minutes. When he begged for help, he was faced with a riot-control shot gun; "The next day I awoke to severe pain all over my body, as I had large burn blisters on my legs, thighs, torso, arms and face. After a few days, I was seen by a nurse and diagnosed with first-degree chemical burns. For two weeks, a yellowish discharge flowed from these wounds." Robert, another person imprisoned at MOCC, similarly wrote of

receiving first-degree burns from secondary exposure after someone else was sprayed in response to a mental health incident.

These are only a few excerpts from the testimonies written in over 100 letters sent to War Resisters League from people incarcerated inside US Prisons regarding abuse of what guards call "bug spray." Amongst the myriad of human rights violations and abuses occurring daily in prisons across the United States, the use of tear-gas, pepper spray and other aerial chemical weapons is a frequent invisibilized abuse. Chemical weapons spraying as an enforcement tactic in US prisons is often in response to minor infractions, people struggling with mental health issues, people advocating for their rights, and most often occurs in enclosed spaces. While tear gas is legal for domestic use, it is banned from use in warfare by international law -- a double standard in desperate need of elimination.

### What Is Tear Gas?

Tear gases, counter intuitively, are not actually gases, but solid particles dispersed through the air via aerosol. Developed and used in World War I, tear gases are nerve agents that specifically activate pain-sensing neurons. Despite being distributed by US companies with names like Nonlethal Technologies and AmTech Less Lethal, tear gases are far from benign irritants. Rather, evidence shows that they are dangerous, potentially lethal, chemical agents as evidenced by the 2010 death of Randall Jordan-Aparo in Florida's Franklin Correctional Institution after guards blasted tear gas through his food slot. Tear gasses are so dangerous, in fact, that they are outlawed for use during wartime under the Chemical Weapons Convention and 1925 Geneva Protocol.

### Treatments for Tear Gas Poisoning:

While flushing with water can decontaminate some tear gas exposure, sinisterly, use of water can also exacerbate the pain especially when exposed to the highly toxic Dibenzoxazepine-based CR tear gas and other types of chemical agents.

Many groups outside US Prisons who face state repression have gathered their own methods of addressing tear gas exposure. ... Persons incarcerated in the US, however, have little access to these responses or protections. There are a few points shared on the International News Safety Institute (INSI) website, however, that people enduring in prisons can keep in mind when sprayed by tear gas or pepper spray.

If you have no protection, cover your mouth and nose with cloth or clothing to protect your airway (keep in mind the outside of your clothes are likely to be contaminated).

Keeping your arms outstretched will help CS gas to come off your clothing.

Try to get to high ground -- most teargases are heavier than air, so the highest concentrations tend to sit nearer to the ground. Do not crouch.

Remember that the gas will infuse clothing for many months; so any clothing that may have been contaminated should be immediately washed several times or discarded.

Many of these agents come in the form of crystals, which react with water. Using small amounts of water (such as a wet towel

or shirt) immediately after exposure to CS gas is likely to reactivate these crystals and may prolong the effects. Any exposed skin should be washed with soap and lots of water. Shower first in cold water, then warm water. Do not bathe.

Don't rub your eyes or face, or this will reactivate any crystals.

### Resistance to Tear Gas

The ultimate remedy for the people imprisoned in Mount Olive Correctional Complex is a ban on the use of tear gas and other chemical agents. Thus, despite facing risk of retaliation, people at MOCC have filed lawsuits, made complaints, reported their stories and written letters to several organizations with the desire to expose the horrific abuses they have endured. They inform each other of their rights and support each other in speaking out against these attacks.

Advocates, organizers, and activists living within prisons, face a formidable challenge of an expanding domestic weapons market that outfits prisons and police departments nationally. The same companies profiting from chemical weapons abuse in prisons are also yielding high revenues from global sales to corrupt regimes repressing dissent and social justice movements throughout the world. These companies demonstrate and sell their weapons at expos such as Urban Shield -- a trade show and training exercise for SWAT teams and police agencies that bring local, national and international law enforcement agencies together with "defense industry contractors" to provide training and introduce new weapons to potential markets.

Hundreds of people incarcerated in US prisons are resisting by telling their stories of abuse through tear gas and other chemical weapons. It is clear that all teargas use violates human health and rights. In the face of extreme, risky, and what some consider "hopeless" conditions, however, the testifiers of these abuses possess a rich resilience that may prove to be its own powerful antidote.

*Through dignity, self-determination, and liberation for all, YaliniDream envisions shifting human economies from extraction, exploitation, violence, and war to love, nourishment, care, creativity, and regeneration-- seeking peace through justice in lands of earth, psyche, soul & dream. Twitter: @YaliniDream*



Paul Magno

# Reflections on Supporting Peace Prisoners

## Paul Magno

In July of 2012 three disarmament activists in the United States - Greg Boertje-Obed, Megan Rice and Michael Walli - engaged in a nonviolent direct action they dubbed "Transform Now Plowshares" at Oak Ridge, TN's Y12 National Security Complex. Oak Ridge is a site dating back to the beginning of the Manhattan project during World War II and remains an essential link in the nuclear weapons production capability of the US. The three were able to traverse the terrain of the Federal reservation during the night, overcome four security fences, and confront the Highly Enriched Uranium Maintenance Facility (HEUMF) - a repository for 400 metric tons of bomb-grade uranium, enough for 10,000 nuclear weapons. Once there they marked the area with crime scene tape, unfurled peace banners and marked the walls of the building with human blood and spray-painted biblical peace messages.

Once arrested they were eventually charged with property damage and sabotage, both felonies, and tried before a jury in federal court the following May. All were convicted on both charges, and in February of 2014 given prison sentences ranging from approximately three years for the Megan Rice (a Catholic nun in her 80's), and five years for each of the men. They appealed their conviction under the Sabotage act and won that appeal in May 2015, leading to their immediate release. This was the first time in the thirty-five year history of the Plowshares movement in the United States that convicted activists had ever won a legal appeal.

Several of us maintained a continuous key role in the support of the Transform Now Plowshares over the years these events played out and in the year or so that followed their release. This article is focused on that aspect of this particular disarmament witness, what it entailed, and what lessons might benefit our peace and justice movements going forward. Many of us in the United States ask ourselves what serves activists and movements, what keeps the concerns we need to uphold in the public eye, and to do that soul searching at the brink of the Trump era - about how to persevere - is of obvious

importance.

As the action became known in July 2012, several of us agreed to do key work in support of the Transform Now Plowshares. That involved coordinating long-time local peace activists and a broader national (and international) network of established grassroots nuclear resisters in support of the challenges presented by their arrest and prospective trial. Locally, our primary partner was the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, which has faithfully worked at exposing the work of the Y12 nuclear complex for decades and brought a lot issue knowledge and local resources to the effort. More broadly, we were able to share the word with the network of contacts we were acquainted with as a result of over three decades of similar Plowshares actions primarily in the US and then to extend that outreach to other faith-based and decidedly strong and progressive peace groups. We had the good fortune to see movement and media fascination with the boldness of the action (Y12 was regarded up to this point as the most secure nuclear facility in the world, and termed "the Fort Knox of uranium" in official literature). The figure of Megan Rice, an 82 year-old nun particularly caught the imagination of many, including national and international media, appearing early on in a front-page New York Times story on the action.

To support the action, we concluded that we needed to accomplish several practical goals. We needed to:

- develop strong local support, in the form of people who could be willing to house and feed out-of-town activists, turn out for public events -in court and out - from time to time, communicate with, visit and otherwise support the three activists in jail.
- reach that national and international network of dedicated peace and disarmament activists by phone, by electronic media and involve them in the witness.
- prepare for the legal aspects of the case, enlisting legal talent that would amplify the three who preferred to represent themselves in court so as to better adhere to the basic message they brought to Y12 in the first place - that the

perpetuation of the nuclear threat by the US national security establishment is immoral and illegal and that conscientious nonviolent resistance is good, necessary and legally required. That legal preparation would include pursuit of the legal resources and expert witnesses that could enable a robust presentation of that line of "defense" at trial.

Raising the money needed to assist with this array of needs, especially seeing to the three activists and their public witness in court or in other venues was also an important practical goal.

We relied on a great deal of self-organisation based on historic relationships and commitments we regarded as dependable. Nonviolence and community were among the available movement resources that we could call into play, not simply as philosophy but as actual lived long-term experience. Such powerful community began with the three actors and their core support community, but was available in abundance from many of the individuals and networks we called on in response to the needs of the Transform Now Plowshares witness. Thus the conduct of the witness, while centered on the three and their initial witness, nevertheless became a community endeavor and a participatory option for a growing circle of people that became world-wide in its manifestation. In time, the action and the Plowshares movement was honored by the Nuclear-Free Future Award (based primarily in Europe) and a speaking tour post-release featuring Sr. Megan travelling to six countries and eight cities over three weeks in January 2016.

The decentralized and organic growth of that overall witness relied less on a fortified ideology or strategy, that it did on some basic practices that movements do not always explicitly recognize as important. Mutual trust and respect played a large part in allowing it to spread out through the networks I've described, rather than heavily centralized direction. The core group confined ourselves narrowly to the essential messaging and information that needed to originate from Knoxville TN, site of the trial and hub for the support effort, and get shared out and counted on the wider networks to know how to work to promulgate that knowledge. That included initiating as appropriate petition campaigning and letter writing to the court, as well as dates and times of key court dates and what was expected of participants. In response, dozens of localized contacts and groups around the US repeated that info and hundreds from around the country travelled to Knoxville to augment the local activists and organizing core to join in amplifying the witness. During trial and post-trial hearings, we had not one but two courtrooms full of supporters (one by closed-circuit video feed) much of the time.

In part because of this organic and collaborative approach, we had much more extensive media reach than the many Plowshares actions that have occurred over the decades. A major feature in the Washington Post, just before trial was unprecedented both as to coverage afforded the direct disarmament movement and also by the Post's own history of column-inches dedicated to a human-interest/ news feature. Lengthy features also appeared outside of the English language press internationally, such as Der Spiegel a major German news journal. In fact, Sr. Megan Rice first heard about her impending release from prison in May of 2015, via British Broadcasting Corporation's overnight US broadcast at 3am on Saturday morning, following a court order from the appellate court that

had only been issued at the end of the business day Friday and not yet communicated to her jail.

A rooting on deep community and deep nonviolence as basic resources to carry out and then support this action has been central to its success in a number of terms. Premising reliance on those resources on mutual respect and trust in a circle of participants, diverse in age, experience and perspective but all welcomed and included as participants according to their abilities has made this a radical and communitarian witness, one which collaborate with the arc of the universe, bending toward justice, that is, nonviolence and disarmament.

*Paul Magno is a Washington DC based participant in the Catholic Worker movement and a past Plowshares prisoner. He was part of the core support group for the Transform Now Plowshares over more than four years.*

# Call-out for The Broken Rifle 108: the militarisation of policing and security

All around the world, police forces are being militarised. The lines between the roles of the police and the military are being blurred, with narratives of heightened threat (from terror, drugs, social unrest or people on the move) being used to justify this militarisation.

Militarised policing is something which runs far deeper than the surface veneer of militarised equipment and body armour;

*Militarised police in training. Photo: Tim McAteer*



scratch the bullet-proof vest and underneath you will find a militarised mentality conditioned to perceive the 'other' as a threat, an enemy, and to respond accordingly.

This issue of The Broken Rifle will explore the different faces and changing nature of police militarisation as well as the consequences for our societies; the violence and brutality inflicted upon subject populations, the entrenchment of racist social hierarchies and patriarchal mindsets, the maintenance of hegemonic power structures.

By doing so we hope to draw out what experiences of police militarisation around the world hold in common, spark conversations and bring to the forefront acts of solidarity and resistance.

If you would like to volunteer to write an article or be interviewed for this issue, or to suggest someone else that may wish to contribute, please write to us at [sarah@wri-irg.org](mailto:sarah@wri-irg.org). Submissions should be between 800 and 1,200 words and be received no later than 12th June.

## WRI bookshop

War Resisters' International offers a range of merchandise via its webshop. These and many other books can be ordered online — and some are even available for reading online or downloading as PDF. Check out the WRI webshop at <http://wri-irg.org/webshop>

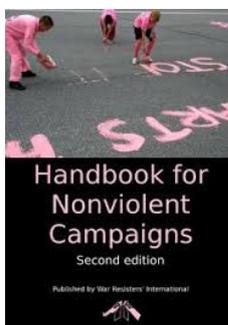
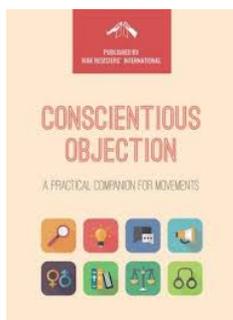
### Conscientious objection: a practical companion to movements

This book is intended as a practical companion for conscientious objection movements and all those whose work forms part of the continuum of war resistance. It has been written by activists who are campaigning against all kinds of injustice, all over the world. Learning from the lived experience of these activists, the aim is to help

movements work together, surmount the external challenges they face, and enhance the concept of conscientious objection, using it in new and innovative ways - such as against war profiteering, or the militarisation of youth.

The book also has a specific focus on gender, and the often invisible role of gender, both in the war machine, and in the movements which oppose it.

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### Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns: second edition

Social change doesn't just happen. It's the result of the work of committed people striving for a world of justice and peace. This work gestates in groups or cells of activists, in discussions, in training sessions, in reflecting on previous experiences, in planning, in experimenting and in learning from others.

Preparing ourselves for our work for social justice is key to its success.

There is no definitive recipe for successful nonviolent actions and campaigns. This handbook, however, is a series of resources that can inspire and support your own work, especially if you adapt the resources to your own needs and context.

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# On International Human Rights Day, Palestinian People's Suffering Continues

*We publish this statement from the Prisoners Support and Human Rights Association - Addameer which puts the arrest and detention of Palestinians in 2016 in the context of wider human rights abuses of Palestinians. Download the report as a pdf [here](#).*

07 December 2016

This year, Palestinians commemorate International Human Rights Day mourning over 266 Palestinians including 76 children who were killed by Israeli Occupation Forces since October 2015. Palestinians mark this day following over a year of nonstop violence and widespread human rights violations by Israeli Occupation Forces against the Palestinian population used as a form of collective punishment and a method of control of Palestinian society. These consistent and systematic policies by the occupation include, mass arrests campaigns, torture, hunger strikes, extrajudicial executions and issuance of discriminatory legislations.

## Extrajudicial Executions and Withholding of Bodies

In 2016 there have been 120 Palestinians killed and extrajudicially executed. Since October 2015, there have been 266 documented Palestinians killed since October 2015, 78 from Hebron, 58 from Jerusalem, 24 in Ramallah, 21 in Jenin, 19 from Nablus, 15 in Bethlehem, 5 in Tulkarem, 4 from Salfit, and 3 from Qalqiliya, 2 from 1948, and 34 from Gaza (Jerusalem Center for the Study of Israeli-Palestinian affairs/Addameer). 76 of those have been children, about 29% of the total number. 24 of them are female.

Currently, the bodies of 25 Palestinian extrajudicially executed Palestinians are being held, including the bodies of seven children. Of the 25 bodies withheld, 24 are from the West Bank and one is from occupied Jerusalem (Jerusalem Center for the Study of Israeli-Palestinian affairs/Addameer.)

## Arrests of Palestinians

Under Article 3 and Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all human beings have the right to liberty and the right not to be subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention. Palestinians, however, have suffered from a widespread policy of arrests and use of arbitrary detention by IOF for decades. In the months following October 2015, and throughout 2016, mass arrests campaigns have continued throughout occupied Palestine. The number of daily arrests has increased over the past year and has included the arrests of different ages and social groups, children, women and men. Since October, at least 7955 Palestinians were arrested, including 1963 children, 229 women and girls, 41 journalists and five members of the Palestinian

Legislative Council. Currently there are approximately 7000 Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli detention, including 400 children, 7 Palestinian legislative council members, 64 females, and over 720 Palestinian administrative detainees held without charge or trial.

## Administrative Detention of Palestinians

The use of administrative detention continued throughout 2016 in a widespread and systematic form. Addameer documentation unit finds that between 1 January 2016 and 30 November 2016, there were 1586 total administrative detention orders issued, among them 588 new orders and 998 renewed orders. Among the current 720 Palestinian administrative detainees, there are 5 children, 3 Palestinian Legislative Council members, and one female. These include, for example, the case of Hamza Hammad, a 16-year old Palestinian child from the village of Silwad who is held under administrative detention without charge or trial since 28 February 2016.

## Hunger Strikes for Dignity

Throughout 2016, following the escalation of the use of administrative detention, a number of Palestinian detainees have resorted to hunger in protest of their detention without charge or trial based on "secret information". The most recent mass hunger strike began in June 2016 following the administrative detention of Bilal Kayed, who had completed serving over 14 years in prison; over 100 Palestinian prisoners and detainees joined a solidarity hunger strike. Numerous individual hunger strikes have occurred throughout 2016 in protest of administrative detention – such as Mohammad Al Qeeq (2015-2016), Malek Al-Qadi (2016), Mohammad Al-Balboul (2016), and Mahmoud Al-Balboul (2016).

Currently, two Palestinian prisoners, Anas Shadid and Ahmad Abu Fara, are on hunger strike against their imprisonment without charge or trial under Israeli administrative detention. Abu Fara, 29, and Shadid, 19, have been on hunger strike since 25 September. Both have been imprisoned without charge or trial since 1 and 2 August, respectively, and are on strike to demand their release.

## Imprisonment of Palestinian Children

Under International Human Rights Law, children must be afforded special protection and their best interest should always be a primary consideration. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by Israel in 1991, prohibits the arbitrary detention of children and stipulates that the detention and imprisonment of children should only be used as a measure of

last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. Palestinian children, however, are regularly subjected to arrests and detention by Israeli occupation. Children often undergo ill-treatment at the hands of IOF forces and are subject to a wide array of violations. Arrests usually take place in night raids and are often physically and verbally abused during arrest, transfer and detention.

Almost one-fourth of those arrested since 1 October were children, which resulted in tripling the number of Palestinian minors held in Israeli occupation prisons to reach least 400 children. 5 of them are currently held under administrative detention considered to be a “direct and immediate threat to the national security of Israel.” Israeli occupation also continues to target children with new harsh policies and laws including a new Knesset law which would allow custodial sentences for children as young as 12-year-old.

## **Torture and ill-Treatment**

Torture and ill treatment has continued throughout 2016. Addameer has documented an escalation of the use of violence and excessive force against Palestinians during arrest and detention. Several Palestinian youth were arrested after being shot by IOF forces in the aftermath of alleged stabbing attacks. Many of those who were arrested after being shot were subjected to field interrogations while bleedings, interrogations during treatment in hospitals while chained to bed as well as being subjected to harsh interrogations shortly after release from hospitals. It has been noted by Addameer’s documentation unit that the use of shaking has become more prominent in the interrogation centers. Other practices include sleep deprivation, deprivation from food and water, threats against family members, threats of sexual violence, and threats of administrative detention without charge or trial. Medical negligence continues to be a policy, with specialized medical care unavailable to prisoners and detainees.

## **Medical Negligence**

The Israeli Prison Service (IPS) has adopted a policy of deliberate medical neglect against prisoners and detainees. Human rights organizations estimate that since the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000 until 2008, 17 Palestinian prisoners have died in Israeli prisons and detention centers as a result of medical negligence. In HaSharon prison, there are approximately 10 Palestinian females that have been injured from the time of their arrests as a result of attacks by Israel forces, who are not provided with adequate medical treatment. HaSharon and Damon prisons continue to lack specialized medical care for women.

## **Human Rights Defenders and Journalists**

2016 witnessed the crackdown and repression of human rights defenders and journalists. These include Addameer media officer Hasan Safadi, who was arrested on May 1st, 2016. On October 2016, Israeli Forces arrested Mr. Salah Khawaja, the coordinator of the Popular Campaign against the Wall and Settlements and member of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee, in central Ramallah, and caused destruction in the property of his home in the raid and sprayed tear gas in the neighborhood resulting in suffocation of residents.

## **Re-arrest of Released Prisoners**

In 2016, Article 186 of Military Order 1651 has continued to

affect Palestinians who were released in the prisoner exchange deal of 18 October 2011. Since then, several of these formerly released prisoners were then re-arrested based on secret information. Currently, there are approximately 60 prisoners and detainees who have been rearrested since 2011 under article 186 who remain in detention, and the majority of those sentenced were ordered to serve the remainder of their previous sentences based on secret information.

For example, Nael Barghouti, 59, continues to be held despite having served his latest sentence of 30 months. An appeal was submitted by the prosecution on 25 November 2015, who seek to re-instate a previous life sentence on Mr. Barghouti. The military court is to provide an answer to the prosecution’s appeal by 17 December 2016. Mr. Barghouti faces the possibility of re-instatement of life sentence based on secret information.

## **Discriminatory Legislation**

Since October 2015, a series of discriminatory legislation has also been passed. In 2015, an amendment was made to institute mandatory minimum sentences of no less than one-fifth of the potential maximum sentence for throwing stones, and up to 10 and 20 years for adults. The Knesset also passed an amendment to the national insurance law, which effectively denies social benefits to children convicted of “nationalistic-motivated” offenses and “terrorist activities” during their imprisonment. The change also allows Israeli courts to fine their families with up to NIS 10,000 (US\$2,580). In addition, the Israeli Knesset approved a bill to allow custodial sentences for children as young as 12, which is exclusively used against Palestinian children.

## **“Incitement” charge as Obstruction of Freedom of Expression**

The year 2016 also witnessed an increasing number of Palestinians being arrested for incitement charges based on social media posts. Since the beginning of October 2015, Addameer has documented more than 200 cases of arrests of Palestinians, including children, for alleged incitement. The prosecution of Palestinians for social media posts is based on information obtained from the intelligence. The intelligence and prosecution analyze the detainees’ publications by addressing its content, the number of people that interacted with the post (likes and shares), and the comments received.

## **Conclusion**

On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, Addameer calls for an end to ongoing collective punishment by Israeli occupation forces in the form of mass arrest campaigns, rapidly increasing use of administrative detention, continued denial of fair trial, and illegal transfer and deportation of detainees. Addameer therefore calls on members of the international community, particularly UN Member States and relevant UN bodies and agencies, to hold Israel accountable for the ongoing collective punishment and harsh policies against the Palestinian population. Israeli mass incarceration of Palestinians is an inextricable part of the ongoing violence of occupation. Tearing at the fabric of Palestinian society, recent arrest campaigns seek to quash Palestinian ability to endure in their struggles against the occupation. It is important that on this day, we all stand united to call for an end to Israeli violations of Palestinian rights. As Israel acts with ever growing contempt for international law and the will of the international community, action is now needed more than ever.

## On Prisons, Pardons, Puerto Rico and the WRI

Practically my very first act as an overtly political person was to challenge—then publicly defy—what seemed like an unjust U.S. law. At age 17, I declared that I would refuse to register for a military draft that might put me in Central America or elsewhere, fighting against people and ideals which I had nothing whatsoever against. Despite the potential of five years in prison, my refusal tremendously strengthened me, and it remains one of the proudest moments of my life. There is something very liberating about openly resisting what seems like an invulnerable, impenetrable power and "living to fight another day," whether behind bars or not. Edward Snowden is undoubtedly correct: any movement for progress will and must involve defiance of unjust laws and/or unjust implementation of potentially acceptable laws corrupted by unjust, oppressive empire-nations.

It was not a surprise that, at the end of his term as U.S. President, Barak Obama granted clemency to a number of incarcerated peoples. That one of those people was military resister and whistle-blower Chelsea Manning was a bit more of a shock; Manning's case was fairly clear-cut, though strict defenders of freedom of speech joined with anti-war activists to mount a formidable campaign for the transgender former military intelligence analyst. Sentenced to 35 years' imprisonment for violations of the Espionage Act (Manning released close to 750,000 classified or sensitive documents), Obama commuted her sentence to what will effectively be four years behind bars.

Even more surprising was the decision to release Puerto Rican

political prisoner Oscar Lopez Rivera, the longest held prisoner in the history of U.S.-Latin American relations. Contrary to misinformed reports, Lopez Rivera was never convicted of any involvement in violent crime, nor did he refuse to renounce violence when President Clinton offered him and other Puerto Rican nationalists clemency in 1999. The offer Clinton made demanded that this activist—convicted only of the "thought crime" of seditious conspiracy—serve more time than his co-defendants, and left two co-defendants out of the deal. Now that all his fellow compatriots have been released, his continued imprisonment was hypocritical at best. The fact that Lopez Rivera once belonged to an organization which did take responsibility for illegal acts doesn't make every member of the group a criminal; that's simply not the way even the U.S. legal system works. But it was notably not on legal grounds that Obama based his commutation.

Make no mistake about it. Despite the growing involvement of a deeply religious support component from all major faith traditions joining the campaign to free Oscar, despite the insider's influence pressing Obama for a full pardon - Oscar Lopez Rivera's release is based on "our" strategic work. The victory of January 17, 2017—of the granting of clemency for the man still designated by mainstream media as the mastermind of the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN)—is based primarily on a consistently-held, vigorously-fought, simple but stalwart commitment to decades-long, door-to-door, community-to-community, email-to-email (or tweet to tweet) building of a massive, grassroots-based single-minded campaign.



*Matt Meyer with Luis Nieves Falcon and Mairead Corrigan Maguire at the WRI Triennial Conference in Dublin*

nothing short of Mandela-like in its scope and strength. The United Nations itself, a body of almost immeasurable bureaucracy and complexity, nonetheless turned its gaze in Oscar's direction, its Decolonization Committee pledging to visit him this year if he were not to be released. The Fellowship of Reconciliation, the American Friends Service Committee, Pax Christi International, and other related groups played vital roles. But it is also important to note the long-standing and historic role which War Resisters' International (WRI) directly played in the campaign for Oscar's unconditional amnesty.

The Puerto Rican Committee for Human Rights was founded by renowned sociologist, educator and author Luis Nieves Falcon, who left a prestigious career to obtain a law degree and work full time as counsel to and organizer for the more than a dozen independence activists incarcerated in the early 1980s. As architect of the international amnesty campaign, Nieves Falcon, along with Oscar's Chicago-based brother who masterminded work among the Puerto Rican Diaspora living in the U.S., developed a tight core of loyal organizers who developed various aspects of the freedom effort. From the early 1990s onward, I served as main liaison to global peace movement organizations, inter-faith religious groups, and the Nobel laureate community, and we formally launched the efforts to gain broad support within those circles at the 1994 WRI Triennial in Brazil. Over the years, many world-wide tribunals, conferences, and demonstrations were held, with WRI representatives in attendance as part of the solidarity effort. In 2002, however, shortly after twelve of the Puerto Rican political prisoners were released by President Clinton and the campaign for Oscar was gearing up, Dr. Falcon presented as plenary speaker at the WRI Triennial in Dublin, Ireland.

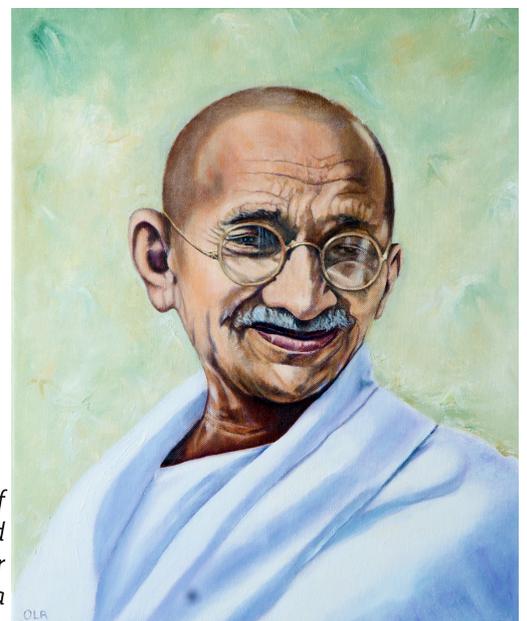
When we consider who "fits in" to the definition of "prisoners of conscience" or prisoners for peace, it is sometimes difficult to navigate the tactical spectrum of where an individual's heart or head might lead. At the WRI India conference of 2010, for example, a petition with Oscar's fine oil painting of Mohandas Gandhi was passed around, and signed by most participants. Spotlighting Gandhi might not have been a choice for Oscar when first arrested in 1981, but his knowledge of and respect for the Indian independence leader developed over time. Oscar's daughter and one of the key spokespeople for the campaign, Clarissa Lopez, was an active participant of WRI's 2014 South Africa conference, where—among other things—she was able to meet Archbishop Tutu and thank him for his consistent support (originally solicited during his days as chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission). Countless events, emails, letters, petitions, news articles and updates were put together by WRI members, sections, affiliates and friends, as a whole, including work at

several junctures to prepare for and engage in nonviolent civil disobedience. At each point, a single letter or a signed petition, a small and solitary event or even attendance at a big conference, may not have seemed like quite enough; but in the end, we won.

From an organizing perspective, we realized that to plan for a concrete victory, we would have to think differently than the average "left" effort; we would have to analyze our particular, twenty-first century geopolitical context. We understood that such an effort would have to be deeply dialectical in nature, rooted in clear (if often-seemingly visionary and grandiose) objectives, based on strategic thinking which evolved over time due to changing material circumstances, utilizing a diversity of insider/outsider tactics. In addition, the granting of clemency to one man after 35 years behind bars is, in itself, a mildly reformist act; we knew that the Oscar case had more far-reaching implications as Oscar the man became the definitive symbol and champion voice of an entire people. More than any Puerto Rican, he personifies a special unity which values cultural integrity, justice for all, grassroots participatory democracy, and the power of love.

As a movement, we are well aware that there will likely be future U.S. political prisoners. From an internationalist perspective, we know that repression breeds resistance and that the oppression of the current period will make rebellion inevitable. With the struggles of the 1960's and 70's fading into history, however, freedom for the iconic elders of this period who are still behind bars must be made a priority of every human rights and peace organization. If we are to build peaceful, democratic, and just societies, we know that prison should never be a place for any peacemakers or justice-seekers. Let us work in better coordination and unity to meet these trying times, and build consciousness throughout the world, as we break both the literal and figurative prison chains around us.

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*The portrait of Gandhi, painted in prison by Oscar Lopez Rivera*