

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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June 2010

CONDITIONS FOR OUR CHILDREN

I. A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION: UNDER JLWOP: KIDS WHO AREN'T CONVICTED OF KILLING WON'T HAVE TO DIE IN PRISON.

The U.S. has been the only nation in the world that imposes life without parole sentences on juveniles with non-homicide convictions. International human rights law prohibits any sentence of Life Without Parole for juveniles (JLWOP). There are more than 2,500 people, convicted in cases that originated when they were under 18, and sentenced with no hope of parole. On May 17, the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Graham v. Florida*, ruled that the 129 of those convicted of non-homicide crimes could not be given Life Without (LWOP) sentences.

There are 37 states and the federal government with LWOP on their books for non-homicide convictions. Of the 129 cases directly affected by this new ruling, 77 (more than 70% of the total) of those imprisoned are in Florida. The others are in: Louisiana (17), Virginia (8), Iowa (6), Nevada (5), California (4), Mississippi (2), one each in Nebraska, South Carolina, Delaware, and Oklahoma and six in the federal system.

The effects of the ruling are not automatic. The decision means that the prisoners covered by it are only entitled to a new sentencing hearing. Most of those with JLWOP sentences do not have lawyers. In addition, a state can still sentence these young people to extremely long prison terms that, for all practical purposes, come close to Life Without, so long as there is some possibility that they will be able to appeal for parole. The standard in the opinion, written by justice Kennedy, is that the state "must provide him or her with some realistic opportunity to obtain release before the end of that term."

A hopeful note is that there are a lot of states already re-evaluating life without parole sentences for any juvenile criminal conviction as Texas and Colorado already have.

II. A LONG LEAP BACKWARD FOR "VIOLENT JUVENILE CRIMINALS" IN NEW MEXICO:

On May 18, governor Richardson of New Mexico directed the NM Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) to start reporting juveniles *accused* of violent offenses--including youths accused of sex crimes--who are foreign nationals to federal immigration authorities. The Albuquerque spokesperson for ICE (Immigration, Customs & Enforcement, formerly INS or "la migra") said juveniles can be deported for the same reasons as adults.

In 2006 the head of CYFD suspended a state regulation requiring the department to report such children to ICE. The suspension of the regulation at that time was made in an effort to provide services to everyone in the state agency's care. CYFD believed that it was its duty to provide rehabilitative services to youth, regardless of their immigration status.

III. AN CONTINUING RACIST PARADE IN TEXAS SCHOOLS:

This one comes as absolutely no surprise. Despite similar levels of behavior in schools deemed inappropriate by authorities, African-American and Latino students are punished more frequently as well as more severely than white students. The rates of mandatory expulsions required by the state for serious infractions are similar for all ethnic groups. However, 70% of expulsions are discretionary and African-American students are expelled from school four times more often than whites. Such students are more likely to drop out of school and become involved with the court and penal system.

Thus, once again, African-Americans and Latino are punished more frequently, as well as more severely, than whites. School officials has decided that it is the job of law enforcement to handle what is seen as misbehavior, to criminalize it.

CRIME OF THE MONTH aka Crimetoppers

On May 31, 2010, armed militants seized six civilian vessels in international waters. The ships carried humanitarian relief supplies bound for a small enclave on the Mediterranean Sea which has been the target of an illegal siege by a neighboring state. On board were nearly 700 civilian aid workers from 40 countries.

After two people were killed during the initial assault, some remaining passengers and crew attempted to resist the onslaught using metal poles and sticks to fend off the terrorists. At least nine civilians were murdered and over 70 wounded as the attacking forces opened fire with automatic weapons into the crowded passenger deck of one of the ships. The ships have been taken to a nearby port and the passengers imprisoned. No international representatives have been allowed access to the prisoners. The names of the dead and wounded have not been released.

Who could these ruthless marauders be? Somali gangs, terrorizing the high seas? Perhaps Iranian jihadis who hate our way of life? Well, no. In fact, this crime was committed by the Israeli Navy, which is armed and otherwise funded by the U.S. The pirated ships and supplies have been taken to an Israeli port. The humanitarian aid workers are being interrogated in Israeli prisons. As of this writing, despite widespread international outrage, the Obama administration has yet to issue a condemnation of Israel for committing these atrocities.

Our Crime of the Month is the continued flagrant violation of international and human dignity by Israel.

This two page paper version of the CPR monthly newsletter will be included in all correspondence we send out. Others who would like to receive it must send us a stamped, self-addressed envelope (up to 12 at one time) for every issue they would like to receive.

Please continue to send us address change updates and renewal requests in order to stay on our mailing list and to receive the year-end holiday card/new calendar. Our address is: PO Box 1911.

Many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons Project for making the newsletter available on-line at: <http://www.realcostofprisons.org/coalition.html>
Download it and mail it to comrades and loved ones inside!

WE ARE NOW DEBT FREE! We are working to resume bulk-mailing newsletters.

VOICES IN SOLIDARITY

A CALL FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCES

The Coalition is trying hard to update our African American resource list. We can't find many groups, and of those, few are responding to us. Make a difference by sharing with other African American prisoners. Write to us with information about any African American resources you know of.

LA VOZ DE ESPERANZA

The bi-lingual publication of the San Antonio Esperanza Peace & Justice Center receives frequent requests for subscriptions to its publication *La Voz* from prisoners. It needs help to be able to mail *La Voz* to those incarcerated who want it. Contact: *La Voz de Esperanza*, Attn: Prisoner Subscription Fund, 922 San Pedro, San Antonio TX 78212.

CALIFORNIA LIFER NEWSLETTER (CLN)

Regrets that CLN has had to discontinue some of its research and downloading services, which proved to be far more costly in time and money than anticipated. CLN will continue to provide copies of state and federal court cases decisions and some publications and supplies. Write for details: CLN, PO Box 687, Walnut CA 91788.

SAVE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

A January U.S. Supreme Court decision has resulted in the Mumia's case being able to re re-argued before the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals and can again be appealed to the Supreme Court. For more information contact: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, PO Box 2012, New York NY 10159.

THE SAM JOHNSON WRITING AWARD 2010

Deadline July 1, 2010 for pieces up to 500 words; cash prizes. Poetry and prose eligible; winning entries to be published in *The Wing*, the quarterly newsletter of the sponsoring organization, *LifeLines*. Send to: *The Wing* Editorial Team, 49 Ramillies Close, Chatham, Kent, ME5 7SA, United Kingdom (postage: 1 oz. for \$.98).
GLOBAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY FOR TROY DAVIS

Is set for Tuesday, June 22, the day before his evidentiary hearing on Wednesday, June 23, in the Savannah federal district court for southern Georgia. Actions will be held in many locations. For more information, contact: Amnesty International, 5 Penn Plaza, New York NY 10001, 212-807-8400.

Hay 37 estados de los EE.UU. que rechazaron la implementacion del REAL ID Act porque el costo es demaciado alto para muchas personas.