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NewsWire

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Plans for Cambridge primate prison dropped

arkangelweb, 27.01.2004 11:03

The decision by Cambridge University to withdraw plans to build Europe's largest primate research centre heralds a great victory for the SPEAC (Stop Primate Experiments at Cambridge) campaign, but most importantly, a victory on behalf of the primates destined to suffer there.

The facility was intended to be used for experiments on Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and Huntington's disease. The SPEAC campaign has highlighted the undemocratic nature of the Government's intervention and the "arrogance" of Cambridge University in their alliance to ride roughshod over public opinion. The Labour Government were the main backers of this project; the main protagonist behind the drive to make Cambridge the primate research capital of Europe was Labour's chief financial backer Science Minister Lord Sainsbury. Sainsbury is well known to have huge financial interests in the Biotechnology industry, which would have been the main beneficiary of the proposed centre at 307, Huntingdon Rd.

During the planning stages, Cambridge University refused to listen to opposition from Cambridge District Council, the Police and local residents but were unable to ignore the mounting pressure recently applied by the SPEAC campaign to prevent the laboratory from being developed.

SPEAC has succeeded in bringing about this volte-face because it brought together not just the combined will of Animal Rights campaigners from around the world (demonstrations have been staged as far afield as New York), but garnered willing support from the local Cambridge community who have opposed the plans from the outset.

Questions must surely be asked as to the Government's and Cambridge University's duplicity in forging ahead with the plans, making a mockery of the

Government's alleged democratic credentials. On two separate occasions, Cambridge District Council dismissed the planning application made by the University; the Government then instigated an independent planning enquiry which once again resulted in the refusal for planning permission on the grounds that Cambridge University had failed to demonstrate that the proposed centre at 307, Huntingdon Rd was in the national interest. During the public enquiry, both local residents and the Police voiced strong objections to the proposals. Despite the opposition and recommendations, the Government chose to give the go ahead to the universally unpopular plans.

This is a landmark victory for the Animal Rights movement and must surely put paid to any future plans to build a similar facility elsewhere in the UK.



What Hutton really tells us

greentea, 09.02.2004 20:55

There are three things you need to know about all this WMD/Hutton/Iraq stuff.

First, the worst thing about the Hutton Report is that it simultaneously (a) refuses to discuss the issue of the reliability and manipulation of intelligence as outside its remit, but (b) clears the government of knowingly including false intelligence in the dossier, and legitimises the presentation of cherry-picked intelligence to justify

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going to war. This means no proper inquiry into whether intelligence was manipulated, only into whether (and if so why) it was wrong. And it means moral probity for the government's reversal of the policy process: not formulating a policy on the basis of evidence, but selectively presenting evidence to suit an existing policy. Suddenly, cherry-picking of intelligence at all levels is not lying, but subconscious sexing up.

Second, when Tony Blair says he didn't know the 45-minute claim referred only to battlefield weapons when he asked MPs to vote for war, he has got to be either incompetent or lying. Either he failed to ask basic questions about the meaning of intelligence claims before authorising the publication of the dossier (which included the 45-minute point four times), or he withheld information that was bound to affect the choice between war and continued inspections. In any case, it strongly suggests that WMD were not the main motivation.

Third, none of this is interesting if your interest is in showing you were right to support or oppose the war. That debate concerns the complex tangle of political, legal, humanitarian and ethical questions that the violence of war inevitably both disavows and magnifies. Maybe regime change was justified on humanitarian grounds, maybe it wasn't. As yet it's probably too close to call. What is clearer, and what matters, right now, is this: liberal democracy is full of shit.

Hutton has shown that the decision to go to war, whether or not we think it was correct, and despite an intense and detailed year-long public debate, was taken badly, or dishonestly, or both. And those who took it, be they liars or fools, can ensure that we never find out which.

Anti Monarchists get £80,000 from Met

queeny, 10.02.2004 01:11

The Metropolitan Police have settled an action brought against them by 23 anti monarchist protesters for unlawful arrest and breaches of the Human Rights Act in particular in particular their rights to liberty, privacy, freedom of expression and freedom of association. This followed a demonstration at the Queen's Golden Jubilee Day celebrations (4th June 2002).

The Met have accepted liability and apologised in a letter to each person arrested. They have also awarded damages totalling over £80,000.

The circumstances of the arrests were bizarre, verging at times on the farcical. As the demo ended some of the participants walked to the nearby Goodman's Field pub. They were followed by a large group of police officers who waited outside and, following a briefing, 40 of them entered the pub encircling the group, by now seated and enjoying a bank holiday lunchtime drink.

Other customers looked on horrified as the police cautioned, filmed and led the revellers out one by one, making them stand in line on the pavement, under the auspices of "preventing a breach of the peace". Others were arrested in order to "prevent a breach of the peace" on the street having previously been cordoned there by the police.

Officers asked each person in turn their intentions. All 23 were summarily arrested regardless of their answers. Indeed one arrestee stated categorically in specific terms that he had no intention of breaching the peace. The officers repeated parrot-fashion to each and every arrestee that they believed that a breach of the peace was immanent and therefore they would be arrested.

No charges were ever brought and the individuals were released several hours later as jubilee celebrations were drawing to a close. Funny that!

A statement issued by the group read: "This award, apology and acceptance of liability demonstrate that the police now accept no offences were committed, nor were likely to be. We remain convinced that these tactics were employed, planned

and coordinated in advance and at a very senior level, in order to remove any dissent against the monarchy or the jubilee day celebrations themselves."

Shaheedah in Nablus, Palestine

jolifanto, 24.12.2003 11:52

Mika is a Cambridge activist who has been based in Nablus, Palestine since the summer. What follows is an account of the killing of a young woman by the Israeli army as she tried to visit her husband near Ramallah. 'Shaheedah' means female martyr.

The roads from Asira Shamaliya to Nablus city, the regional capital, have been closed for some time. Those trying to brave the mountain trails or skirt around settlements risk military aggression. Kamleh Mohamed Asa'd Sawalha was a recent victim.

Kamleh was a beautiful 21-year-old woman from Asira As-shamaliya. Having married soon after finishing high school, Kamleh already had two little children, a two-year-old and a seven-month baby, with a third on its way. Yet despite high Palestinian expectations of wifely duties, she had successfully combined taking care of her children with studying towards a law degree in the Nablus An-Najah University. With travel between Asira and Nablus long, arduous and frequently impossible, Kamleh had taken a break to nurse her recent baby. Returning to her studies she was in the process of catching up on missed work when she took a break to visit her husband working near Ramallah.

Kamleh and the two-year-old left her home in Asira at 2am last Saturday morning after feeding the baby. Yet she returned twice more to feed the child, asking her mother to promise to take care of her children. Palestinians from Asira are often forced to leave their homes at such early hours, in the hope of bypassing checkpoints without problems. With the Saba'tash route extremely difficult and risky, Kamleh opted to join a taxi taking roads to the west of Nablus.

As they sped through the fields west of and away from Shave Shomron

settlement, an Israeli soldier in a military watch-tower decided to 'stop' the taxi. Rather than issue warning shots, he tried to shoot the driver. Yet the soldier's bad aim or the speed of the taxi meant the two bullets broke the window just behind the driver, entering Kamleh's chest and killing her instantly. With the sound of hitting bullets, the driver stopped. The passengers climbed out and realised that Kamleh had been murdered, as she slumped across the seats relaxing her grip on her child.

The funeral took place in Asira the same day, with Kamleh's body carried through the village. Carried by relatives, the two-year-old wailed for his mother. He hasn't stopped calling for her and asking where she is.

Rather than apologising, the Israeli Army is swapping between claiming that the driver rammed through a checkpoint despite warnings, and claiming that they had information that Kamleh was on her way to do a suicide mission inside the borders of Israel/1948. This is clearly a sick lie to justify the murder. It was dark and there was no way of knowing where Kamleh was sitting. If the Israeli military actually had such evidence, they would have stopped the vehicle when it reached the road, rather than shooting randomly at it from a distance. Furthermore, the Kamleh's co-passengers were very lucky. If the driver had been hit, the resulting car crash might well have killed all ten passengers.

I met Kamleh several times, arguing with soldiers in Saba'tash to allow her to pass. Today I visited the male mourning hall to pay my respects to her family. Men tend to hold back their emotions during such occasions; only the husband's eyes clearly betrayed recent crying. Her 15-year-old brother preferred to speak to me about school. Mahmud, a good friend of mine from the village, and her cousin, also preferred to speak about other matters. Kelly in her visit to the women's mourning hall faced an outpouring of grief and demands that she do something. Bush and Sharon were her responsibility.

I'd like to pass those demands on to people reading this in the US and Britain. How are you dealing with your responsibility in Kamleh's children losing their mother?

Links

Stop Primate Experiments At Cambridge <http://www.primatoprison.org/>
Notes From Palestine <http://www.notesfrompalestine.net/>
Dublin Grassroots Network – No to Fortress Europe
<http://geocities.com/eufortress/>

Upcoming events

March 8th International Women's Day
March 20th No More Lies Mr Blair – Stop The War Coalition march, London
April 30th – May 3rd May Day weekend, Dubin – No to Fortress Europe