

# JUNE 11

AN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH  
ALL LONG-TERM ANARCHIST PRISONERS



A HISTORY

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“JUNE 11: THE HISTORY OF A DAY OF  
ANARCHIST PRISONER SOLIDARITY”

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“AT THE SAME TIME, JUNE 11TH IS A DAY OF WAR. IT’S A DAY OF  
REBELLION BECAUSE LAW AND ORDER MAY RULE BUT THEY DO NOT  
REIGN.

“THE EXISTENCE OF ANARCHIST PRISONERS REMINDS US OF THE  
EXISTENCE OF THE ANARCHIST WAR. A WAR THAT SOMETIMES  
BURNS SLOWLY AND SOMETIMES BLINDS THE HEAVENS WITH ITS  
FIRES.”

-CHRISTOS TSAKALOS, FORMER ANARCHIST PRISONER

For 13 years, anarchists and environmentalists have observed June 11 as a day of action to mobilize around our imprisoned comrades. Over that time, the pace of revolt has quickened, with so many uprisings, clashes, and anarchist attacks that it is difficult to count all of them—not to mention all the indictments, raids, mass arrests, grand juries, and deaths. In this constantly shifting terrain, it's easy to lose track of the origins of our traditions. Our goal here is to trace a short history of June 11 as a small contribution to the global rhythm of revolt. At the end, we've included a timeline illustrating how many people around the world have contributed to the momentum around June 11. We hope to rescue these actions from oblivion, just as we work throughout each year to ensure that our imprisoned comrades will not be forgotten.

June 11 has been observed as a day of solidarity since 2004, when 27 cities hosted events to support Jeff "Free" Luers, an eco-anarchist in his fourth year of imprisonment for the burning of three SUVs in Eugene, Oregon. While a rich history of solidarity practices already existed in North America, those were focused on the Black Liberation and anti-imperialist movements<sup>1</sup> and the hundreds of prisoners still held captive for decades. The capture of Luers and his co-defendant Craig "Critter" Marshall forced the radical environmental and anarchist movements to confront the question of repression in new ways after Luers was sentenced to 22 years and 8 months for an action that didn't hurt anyone. Despite FBI harassment of public educational events, the Break the Chains collective and Luers's support crew organized the solidarity day to mark the third anniversary of his arrest, inviting Ramona Africa to speak in Eugene as a step toward bridging the gap between different generations fighting repression. Ramona is a member of the MOVE family, a group of predominantly Black revolutionaries, who has been supporting her imprisoned comrades for 39 years.

Luers's dignified position throughout his imprisonment and the ongoing fight to release him were vital reference points over the following years as repression intensified into what became known as the Green Scare. The Green Scare extended far beyond the series of cases directed against Earth Liberation Front groups. When Operation Backfire struck in December 2005, leading to the capture of many of the participants in a prolific ELF cell in the Pacific Northwest, it was also intended to sever the connections between eco-saboteurs and mainstream environmental groups, with the FBI aiming to punish many of the latter for their tacit support of radical action. Meanwhile, other FBI agents set out to entrap young people like Eric McDavid, who served many years in prison before his sentence was overturned.

The Green Scare also included many of the classic petty gestures of repression: police harassment and surveillance, blacklists preventing employment, frivolous lawsuits and interventions in civil cases. For example, the harassment directed over many years against Marius Mason and his then-husband Frank Ambrose left the two of them nearly unemployable and surrounded by a trench of fear. Years later, some of Frank's former friends suggested that this was the aspect of the Green Scare that wore him down—particularly as others in the Midwest chose to distance themselves from those under the most intense pressure rather than take a stand against it. Ambrose ultimately chose to cooperate with the authorities, informing against Marius and many others.

As more and more anarchists and eco-saboteurs entered prison, most of them to serve shorter sentences, Luers remained on the support lists. There was the danger that his case would slowly be forgotten amid new raids and disasters, some of which also struck members of his support crew. In response, supporters began to think about the particular needs of long-term prisoners.

Through years of struggle and legal filings, Luers won a shortening of his sentence, leading to his release in December 2009. By this time, however, Marius Mason had been imprisoned for 18 months, having

SOMETHING GREATER THAN THEMSELVES. WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO THEM AND TO OURSELVES TO STRUGGLE AND FIGHT UNTIL ALL ARE FREE.”

As the June 11 statement in 2015 asserted, the struggle “assumes new forms” over time. The renewed solidarity day is now in its sixth year. Eric won his release in early 2015 through the legal research and efforts of his close supporters as well his own determination, against the backdrop of the solidarity and tension developed each June 11. At the same time, the solidarity extended by hundreds of actions and benefits around the world worked to organically transform June 11 into an international project that encompasses support for imprisoned comrades around the world. As a simple step towards maintaining this expansive approach, the assembly that has come together around the day produces a new call each year, aiming to suggest new connections or directions, with reference to ongoing revolts and transformations in anarchist struggle. Some prisoners choose to add to these calls with their own words, detailing experiences and ideas that add to the debate—see, for example, Marius Mason's June 2015 statement.

Autonomous initiatives also shape the development of the June 11 project. For example, the Fight Toxic Prisons convergence, now in its second year, draws connections between environmental organizing against pollution and ongoing struggles by prisoners and others against confinement.

The contributions of countless comrades around the world, imprisoned or not, have taken many forms—including written analyses and messages, benefit events, info-nights, demonstrations, actions, attacks, and bake sales. These do not simply accumulate quantitatively, but are also contributions to the evolution of anarchist revolt in the broadest sense, towards both sustaining our comrades and overturning the world that imprisons them. It's easy to make a contribution on a variety of levels, whether via a benefit show or an action, but it's also always possible to approach the challenge of solidarity in a new way. This creativity is essential to building new paths towards the liberation of anarchist prisoners—and everyone else.

facing decades in prison with few remaining legal appeals, fighting for revolution and the literal destruction of the prisons is perhaps the most pragmatic path towards their release. Rather than conceiving of action and repression as separate moments, revolutionary solidarity suggests it is possible to treat repression as an opportunity to spread and deepen the broader struggle against the whole system. In turn, when anarchists spend time inside prison, it doesn't mean we are alone or that we have to wait for release to contribute to the struggle. Rather, even by simply maintaining a dignified, non-cooperative position relative to investigations, we demonstrate the possibility of defying the state.

4) RELATED TO THE ABOVE POINTS, TO DEVELOP AN EXPANSIVE APPROACH TO PRISONER SUPPORT, IN WHICH A CONSTELLATION OF GROUPS, ASSEMBLIES, AND CELLS COULD CONTRIBUTE TO SOLIDARITY WITH IMPRISONED ANARCHISTS USING MANY DIFFERENT FORMS OF STRUGGLE.

This meant finding ways to escape the model of isolated crews or committees of dedicated solidarity "specialists." It meant developing an experimental approach to action.

Postering for June 11 in Greece.

On the basis of these aspirations, the meeting proposed a reinvigorated June 11 day of solidarity, deriving encouragement from Luers's example and the innovations his support crew had developed over his nearly decade-long imprisonment. In recent years, Luers has distanced himself from the proposal for anarchist solidarity, but he remains an important point of reference. His public statement in 2011 was profoundly inspiring:

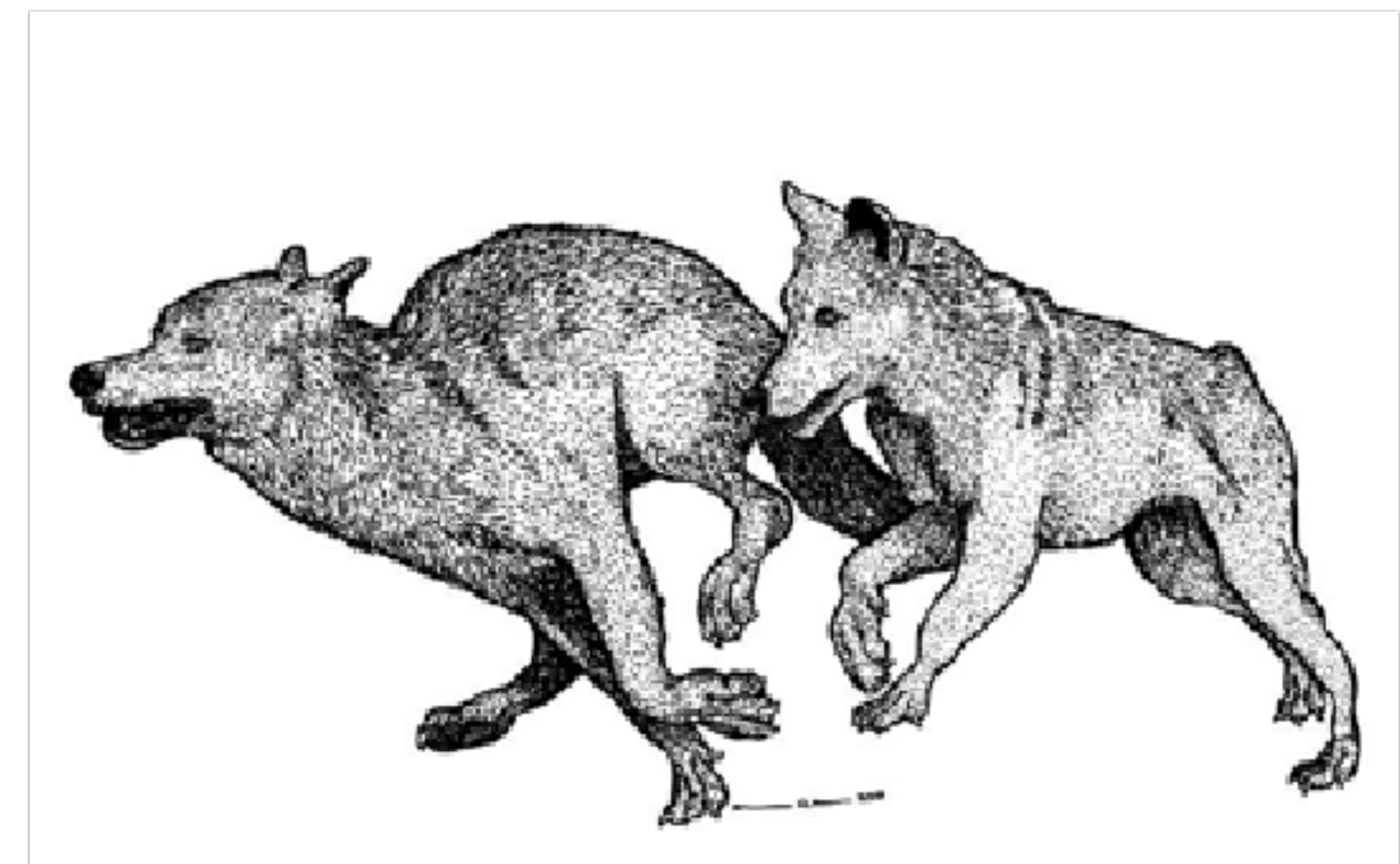
"THIS JUNE 11TH MARKS THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH ERIC McDAVID, MARIE MASON,<sup>2</sup> AND ALL OUR LONG-TERM ANARCHIST POLITICAL PRISONERS. WE ARE HERE TO HONOR THEM, SUPPORT THEM, REMIND THEM THAT THEY ARE NOT FORGOTTEN, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY TO DEMAND THEIR RELEASE.

"JUNE 11TH IS A REMINDER TO US THAT THOUGH WE SPEND OUR DAYS OUTSIDE OF A PRISON MANY OF OUR FRIENDS AND ALLIES SPEND THEIRS BEHIND BARS HAVING SACRIFICED WHAT LITTLE FREEDOM THEY HAD TO FIGHT FOR

received a nearly identical sentence of 22 years after pleading guilty to two major arsons (against a GMO research facility and logging equipment) and acknowledging responsibility for more than a dozen other clandestine actions. Eric McDavid had already spent nearly half a decade behind bars.

In 2008, the long period of defeats and shrinkage that had followed the Green Scare gave way to a new wave of revolt. Yet these new strikes, movements, and insurrections could have caused supporters to forget about Mason and McDavid as new indictments and prison sentences were doled out. There was no guarantee that the thousands of new radicals who emerged out of movements like Occupy Wall Street would be able to recognize Mason, McDavid, or other long-term prisoners as comrades deserving of solidarity.

There was also the problem of slowly diminishing support crews. Only a few years into their imprisonments, solidarity efforts for Mason and McDavid were stagnating by 2011. In response, members of Mason's and McDavid's support crews and social circles came together in early 2011 to discuss coordination, hoping to launch a shared solidarity project.



To summarize some of the goals expressed in this meeting:

1) ADDRESS THE SPECIFIC PROBLEMS OF LONG-TERM PRISONERS BY DISCUSSING HOW TO APPROACH PRISONER SUPPORT IN NEW AND MORE SUSTAINABLE WAYS.

This included considering the most exhausting elements of support, and the intention to develop fresh strategies for fundraising, spreading information about imprisoned anarchists, and other basic tasks. To Libertarians, an open letter written in the late 1970s to support autonomous prisoners in the Spanish state, was an important reference point:

“THE FIRST POINT IS TO MAKE THE PROBLEM WIDELY KNOWN; THEN, TO KEEP IT FROM BEING FORGOTTEN, BY DEMONSTRATING, ALWAYS MORE POWERFULLY, A GROWING IMPATIENCE. THE MEANS WILL MULTIPLY AS THE MOVEMENT TAKES ITS COURSE. IN SUPPORT OF THE PRISONERS, A SINGLE SMALL FACTORY IN SPAIN MIGHT GO OUT ON STRIKE FOR A DAY, AND THIS WOULD BE A MODEL FOR THE REST OF THE COUNTRY. YOU WILL ONLY HAVE TO MAKE IMMEDIATELY KNOWN THEIR EXEMPLARY ATTITUDE, AND HALF THE BATTLE IS ALREADY WON. RIGHT AWAY, ONE SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO START A UNIVERSITY COURSE, A THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE, OR A SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE WITHOUT SOMEONE DIRECTLY INTERVENING OR LETTING LOOSE A RAIN OF TRACTS THAT POSE THE QUESTIONS, WHAT HAS BECOME OF OUR COMRADES? AND, ON WHAT DAY WILL THEY FINALLY BE RELEASED? NO ONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO WALK DOWN ANY STREET IN SPAIN WITHOUT SEEING THE PRISONERS' NAMES WRITTEN ON THE WALLS. AND THE SONGS THAT ARE SUNG ABOUT THEM MUST BE HEARD BY ALL.”

2) TAKE SLOW STEPS TOWARDS DE-INDIVIDUALIZING PRISONER SUPPORT IN NORTH AMERICA.

As more comrades entered prison, the model of “one support crew for one prisoner” seemed unrealistic, doomed to result in eventual isolation. This model also seemed to contribute to the depoliticization of cases, as it tended to emphasize particular aspects of individual situations rather than developing an analysis of shared context. Bringing together solidarity for Mason and McDavid was a small step out of this trap, allowing for more communication and coordination across collectives and distances. It was also a decision not simply to react to the state's

indictments, which acknowledged no relationship between the defendants' cases, but to assert a new understanding of how we could struggle around both.

3) TAKE UP THE PROPOSAL OF REVOLUTIONARY SOLIDARITY MORE AMBITIOUSLY, GOING BEYOND THE PARTICULAR SOLIDARITY ACTION.

Daniela Carmignani's description of this principle was vital:

“SOLIDARITY LIES IN ACTION. ACTION THAT SINKS ITS ROOTS IN ONE'S OWN PROJECT THAT IS CARRIED ON COHERENTLY AND PROUDLY TOO, ESPECIALLY IN TIMES WHEN IT MIGHT BE DANGEROUS EVEN TO EXPRESS ONE'S IDEAS PUBLICLY. A PROJECT THAT EXPRESSES SOLIDARITY WITH JOY IN THE GAME OF LIFE THAT ABOVE ALL MAKES US FREE OURSELVES, DESTROYS ALIENATION, EXPLOITATION, MENTAL POVERTY, OPENING UP INFINITE SPACES DEVOTED TO EXPERIMENTATION AND THE CONTINUAL ACTIVITY OF ONE'S MIND IN A PROJECT AIMED AT REALIZING ITSELF IN INSURRECTION.

“A PROJECT WHICH IS NOT SPECIFICALLY LINKED TO THE REPRESSION THAT HAS STRUCK OUR COMRADES BUT WHICH CONTINUES TO EVOLVE AND MAKE SOCIAL TENSION GROW, TO THE POINT OF MAKING IT EXPLODE SO STRONGLY THAT THE PRISON WALLS FALL DOWN BY THEMSELVES.

“A PROJECT WHICH IS A POINT OF REFERENCE AND STIMULUS FOR THE IMPRISONED COMRADES, WHO IN TURN ARE POINT OF REFERENCE FOR IT. REVOLUTIONARY SOLIDARITY IS THE SECRET THAT DESTROYS ALL WALLS, EXPRESSING LOVE AND RAGE AT THE SAME TIME AS ONE'S OWN INSURRECTION IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CAPITAL AND THE STATE.”

In other words, solidarity is not simply reactive, nor just a matter of directly supporting specific imprisoned comrades. It is a positive project to spread and deepen the revolutionary struggle outside the prisons in conjunction with those who are in prison, even when repression is strong enough to prevent communication.

Linking imprisoned comrades to a broader subversive project felt particularly apt in the case of long-term prisoners for two reasons. First, new connections seem vital to combating their drift into isolation over time: solidarity appears as “active remembering.” Second, for comrades