

TAKE NO PRISONERS



ISSUE 04
DECEMBER 2020

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Welcome to Issue 4

Welcome to Issue Four of *Take No Prisoners*. We welcome you all, and introduce *People Against Prisons Aotearoa* (PAPA) as the place where we are speaking from, as a prison abolitionist organisation working for a fairer, safer, and more just Aotearoa. *Take No Prisoners* is the Official Newsletter of PAPA.

We started in February 2015 as a group concerned about the treatment of transgender people in prisons. Since then, we have become a mass-based organisation that works with different communities to address the worst problems of the criminal justice system, and to build a better one. We are entirely volunteer-run. We have no paid employees and rely on small donations from our membership to keep us going. We exist because the community wants us to exist.

All the evidence shows that prisons don't reduce crime. They take you away from your support networks, put you in an environment where violence is the only solution to your problems, and then expect you to come out a better person.

PAPA believes that everyone has the ability to change. No one is born a criminal. When someone has hurt others, that does not mean they are destined to keep hurting others for the rest of their lives. If people are treated with dignity and respect, and given the resources they need to survive and thrive, we can live in a less violent and more peaceful society.

In order to enjoy this newsletter, you do not have to agree with the idea of prison abolition. We simply hope that you can find some light and entertainment in the issues we discuss in these few pages, and would like to encourage you to write, talk, share, act and think towards achieving justice for everyone.

Kindest regards,

- Davien Grey and Madeline Henry
Prison Newsletter Coordinators on behalf
of *People Against Prisons Aotearoa*.

PAPA
People Against
Prisons Aotearoa

*For Confidentiality Reasons, PAPA will not share your surname anywhere in the newsletter. We welcome all anonymous submissions.
All Issues of TAKE NO PRISONERS will be made available online at papa.org.nz under the 'Publications' Section. We encourage you to share TAKE NO PRISONERS as widely as you wish.

Justice and Corrections Policies Under the New Labour Government

By Madeline Henry

On the 17th of October 2020, the New Zealand Labour Party was re-elected into government. Unlike the last election in 2017, where they needed to work in coalition with the Green Party and New Zealand First, this year they won enough votes to govern alone.

This is promising news in some ways. During the last governmental term, sometimes New Zealand First refused to allow helpful policy changes proposed by Labour to be enacted, and because of the coalition Labour were unable to overrule them.

However, we should still be concerned about Labour's lack of willingness to practice what they preach, because we need Labour to make transformational changes to New Zealand's justice system.

When Labour was elected in 2017, Minister of Justice Andrew Little pledged to cut prison numbers by 30% over the next 15 years. He said that the *Parole Act 2002* and the *Bail Amendment Act 2013* were two laws that needed to be reworked, because the Parole Act leads to more people getting stuck in prison on parole for extended periods of time, and the Bail Amendment Act prevents people from being released on bail before trial, meaning that a big portion of the prison population ends up being made up of remand prisoners awaiting their sentencing.

The number of remand prisoners has been steadily increasing for years, and according to *Radio New Zealand*, these numbers have only gotten worse during the Covid-19 pandemic, because over 60,000 court proceedings were suspended this year due to lockdown.

Currently, remand prisoners make up 36.5% of the total prison population. Despite Andrew Little's complaints about the laws that are causing the problem, Labour have not yet stated that they will be changed. If Andrew Little and the rest of the Labour Party truly want to hit the 30% prison population reduction target, they must repeal the Bail Amendment Act 2013 as soon as possible.

However, Labour is finally able to follow through on their promise to repeal the Three Strikes Law, which was ruled out in their previous term by NZ First. This law was introduced in 2010, and means that repeat offenders must receive a maximum sentence when they reach their third 'strike' (criminal charge). Labour has admitted that the law is unjust and has been "leading to absurd results", and with no coalition partner to appease, this change will be able to occur unblocked.

"If Andrew Little and the rest of the Labour Party truly want to hit the 30% prison population reduction target, they must repeal the Bail Amendment Act 2013 as soon as possible."

According to a press release from early October of this year, Labour plans to expand Māori Pathways prison rehabilitation programme to wāhine Māori, and strengthen the Māori, Pacific and Ethnic Services Group within the police. While these changes may benefit some prisoners, we at PAPA don't believe this is enough. Do we need more Māori programmes and more Māori police, or do we need less Māori in prisons in the first place, and less corrections and people in prison in general?

While Labour leader Jacinda Ardern claims that "the old ways have failed us" and that they want to "tackle the root causes of crime", we do not see this adequately reflected in their plans.

This is why we at PAPA will continue to fight for real change for prisoners, regardless of whether or not the government does too.

PRISONER CORRESPONDENCE NETWORK (PCN):

If you would like to apply for a penpal, send your name, PRN, date of birth, address, and an introduction (about yourself) to:

PCN Aotearoa
PO Box 5870
Wellesley Street Auckland 1141

NOTE: This is NOT a dating service.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

TAKE NO PRISONERS is a free publication of People Against Prisons Aotearoa (PAPA) through the Prisoner Correspondence Network Aotearoa (PCN). To subscribe to this newsletter, to request more information about something you read here, or to submit an article, poem, drawing, comic, or other piece that you would like considered for publication in the newsletter, send a letter to:

TNP, PO Box 5870,
Wellesley Street, Auckland 1141

Result of the 2020 Cannabis Referendum

By Davien Gray

People Against Prisons Aotearoa (PAPA) spent the months leading up to the election this year, campaigning for people to vote 'yes' in the cannabis legalisation referendum. Like many other New Zealanders, we were deeply disappointed by the narrow 'no' vote. Many countries have legalised recreational cannabis and have seen a decrease in use among young people. As well as this public health benefit, the government could also secure more money for health and education through taxes of the sales of weed. This money could also have gone toward fighting the issues cannabis presents, such as funding help for those addicted and their whānau.

The cannabis referendum also had a huge capacity to create positive change for Māori across New Zealand. Māori are more likely to suffer from problematic drug use, while also simultaneously being less likely to be able to access treatment for drug abuse and more likely to be convicted of low level drug offences than other groups in New Zealand.

A 'yes' vote on the referendum would have seen a great reduction in both drug and policing harm to Māori. Police have discretion as to whether they charge individuals on low-level cannabis charges, and this is applied unequally by individual officers depending on each officer's personal bias. The statistics don't lie; although Māori make up only 16.5% of the total population of Aotearoa, Māori comprise 41% of those charged with minor drug offences.

This is a direct reflection of how the criminal justice system in New Zealand disproportionately targets tangata whenua.

"THIS BATTLE IS FAR FROM FINISHED"

So what next? The good news is that the fight isn't over. The NZ Drug Foundation, People Against Prisons Aotearoa and other organisations, are planning their next steps for a fairer Aotearoa. While we might not see the legalisation of recreational cannabis for a little while, many pro-cannabis activists argue that the overwhelming evidence in favour of regulating the drug will have to lead to effective government action.

In the meantime, Green Party MPs and other politicians in support will push for the decriminalisation of cannabis.

Decriminalisation doesn't deal with the issue of supply and the unregulated black market, but it would stop many individuals from unnecessary and unjust incarceration on grounds of having a personal stash. With evidence only mounting in favour of cannabis legalisation and regulation, this battle is far from finished.

HAVE YOUR SAY

We at PAPA really value hearing from you – your perspectives and stories help us understand what you're going through and what we should be trying to help with.

We were lucky enough to receive some awesome letters in response to the last issue of *Take No Prisoners*. ALAN wrote a piece discussing his frustration about Corrections and police supposedly being "employed to protect our communities and save lives", but ending up putting prisoners and their whānau in serious hardship by seizing assets and making lawyers unaffordable.

JEFF wrote a great poem, which we have published in full on page 04.

FERGUS offered his thanks for the previous newsletter, saying that it is

"most interesting and encouraging to know that such an organisation exists; that there are people giving up their personal time towards prison reform."

Kia ora rawa atu, Fergus!

FORD provided a harrowing account of his own experience in prison, saying that he's not going to be able to be released on parole when promised because the wrong address was used on his release sheet. He'll have to remain in prison over the holidays and won't have another chance to get out until January.

"Now I am stuck in prison, my kids and family are hurting because I told them I was coming home because that's what I was told. But now I'm gutted, hurt, angry and exhausted."

Kia kaha Ford – we're so sorry this happened to you.

Finally, ROSS wrote a brilliant piece about his perspective on rehabilitation and reintegration, which we have reprinted a portion of below:

Rimutaka Prison is the largest, yet there is a lack of resources and facilities to assist in reintegration activities. Only a single 20-man self-care unit. In prisons half the size there is two to three self-care units.

While I cannot vote due to being on a life sentence, I take a keen interest in politics and I am thankful that the

newsletter you wrote has the party statements. What I noticed, even from the current government, was a lack of mention on reintegration. \$200 million a year is spent on rehabilitation programs and only \$20 million on reintegration.

I have heard of some prisoners being graduated from rehabilitation programmes who have continued to use violent behaviour or express violent ideation in their group. The threshold for completing these programmes has dropped exponentially within the past five years and it is concerning.

I have tried to bring awareness to the lack of information and education for both prisoners, officers, case managers and prisoners' support network on preparing release plans. Much time and resources are dedicated to making a safety plan but it is left to the prisoner to come up with a release plan.

A release plan should be just as, if not the most important thing, because I see so many return to prison simply for the fact that they didn't plan for their release and take time to consider all the things that outside life has on offer – both good and bad.

Typically they go out with no idea or limited options, so of course they will come back, and they are most likely Māori because they don't have enough support from within their own whānau, hāpu and iwi.

Forget about Māori focus units in every prison, they only serve the interests of the gangs. There needs to be Māori focus units in the community run by the Tangatawhenua or that Rohe to support their people, no one iwi approach can be applied since different protocols and tikanga are observed within the many iwi which exist.

Is there any discussion about adding reintegration units/hubs in prison? There are specialist units for treatment purposes – rehabilitation – but nothing for reintegration. These are two separate issues.

I myself would be out of prison on parole if only I could do reintegration, I have been eligible for four-and-a-half years. I have been approved and have all the recommendations to begin my reintegration, but there is no option available to me at the moment. I am not the only one.

This prison reintegrates prisoners who are subject to deportation orders and that is in violation of current legislation because deportees are not eligible for rehabilitation or reintegration in our system. Any wonder why people (our people) continue to fall through the gaps.

In my opinion, rehabilitation will be much more effective outside of prison in dedicated rehabilitation centres, especially for youth and young adults. How can anyone be realistically rehabilitated in an unsafe environment is beyond me. To do away with prisons in favour of rehabilitation and reintegration centres can be the only way – and since there is mounting evidence which proves that the status quo is severely failing, it is time to be bold and try something new.

The public need to understand that they are being falsely led to believe that the government can ensure their safety from offenders with punitive measures. That has been the political football kicked around every election, and it still hasn't solved the core contributing factors to the social problems.

I fully support the team at PAPA for the mahi you are doing to raise awareness about the issues in prison. Thank you for giving us a voice and publishing this useful newsletter.

Ngā mihi nui kia koutou,

-Ross

SHARE YOUR STORY

If you would like to get in touch with us and have your words published in the next issue of *Take No Prisoners*, please contact me at:

Madeline Henry,
PAPA, PO BOX 5870,
Victoria Street West, Auckland 1142.

If you write in, please include your return address.



I	L	A	T	S	K	R	A	O	R	A	E	T	O	A
Q	E	Y	H	B	N	Q	F	E	D	S	P	L	M	D
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HOLIDAY CARD DRIVE



PAPA's biggest annual project is our holiday card drive, run through the *Prisoner Correspondence Network* (PCN). PCN has grown so much that this year, we have sent 2000 cards to 400 people.

We hope you enjoy the cards, which were made and written by people in the community for you (they chose your first name from an otherwise anonymised list).

Many of the cards were done at card-making bees in Auckland, Hamilton, Whakatane, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin by members of the community, not limited to but including the *Prisoner Correspondence Network* team and volunteers from *People Against Prisons Aotearoa*.

Because the cards are sourced from the public, we are not able to send thanks to specific card writers. But if you want to write a general thanks to our writers and coordinators, we can put it up on social media where the card-writers might see it.

Meri Kirihimete/Merry Christmas!

With love,

The Prisoner
Correspondence
Network Team

WORDFIND

KERIMETE
KOWHAI
POHUTUKAWA
PIWAKAWAKA
GENEROUS

PRESENTS
AROHA
TIDINGS
REINDEER
SLEIGH

SANTA
FAMILY
PAPA
AOTEAROA
TUI

MISTLETOE
SNOW
BEACH
SNOWFLAKE
SEA
SUN



SUDOKU

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5			9	8			1	

POEM:

MAHI

Your attitude, Don't be a snob.
 A well-earned perk, in other words "JOB".
 The options slim, No drafted task.
 Some bossy boots, "Not SURE" just ask.
 A set procedure, mistakes will come!
 THE BOSS, You know, it's everyone.
 The PERKS, the food, the extra time.
 The hard earned coins and SAD faced line.
 Waited my turn now get MAHI.
 It helps the mind, one day I'll see.
 So now I'll try not to mess up K!
 Or it's back to the cue YIPPY YAY!

- Jeff

? DID YOU KNOW? ?

-  No part of Aotearoa is more than 130 kilometres from the sea.
-  Baldwin Street in Ōtepoti (Dunedin) is the steepest street in the world. This title was temporarily given to Ffordd Pen Llech in North Wales in 2019, but the streets were re-measured and it was found that Baldwin Street is still the winner.
-  More people live in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) than the entire South Island.
-  There are nine sheep for each person in Aotearoa.
-  Te Whanganui a Tara (Wellington) is the southernmost capital city in the world.

