

Defend the Right to Protest

Victory for Alfie Meadows & Zak King...

NOW WE WANT JUSTICE



After a two year struggle, Alfie Meadows and Zak King have been found not guilty of charges relating to the student protests against tripling of fees and slashing EMA in Autumn 2010.

This represents an important victory for protest and against police violence. Alfie Meadows nearly died after a blow to the head with a police truncheon during the 30,000 strong demonstration on the night of the fees vote in parliament. He was charged with violent disorder after lodging a complaint with the IPCC.

During the trial video footage and witness evidence attested to Alfie and Zak's defence that they had simply been defending themselves and others against police violence. One GP talked about her experiences of treating a "stream" of head injuries in a makeshift hospital set up by protesters at Parliament Square. The court also heard how police had requested the use of rubber bullets against students. Without irony Officer Woods, who was in charge of the ground operation, defended the restraint of his officers, claiming "the absolute last resort would be if I got a machine gun out and started shooting".

Pattern of violence of punishment

The treatment of Alfie, Zak and other student protesters is part of a wider pattern of police violence and attacks on the right to protest. During the G20 protests Ian Tomlinson died after being assaulted by police whilst trapped in a kettle. Trenton Oldfield was given a six month prison sentence for disrupting an Oxbridge boat race protest against inequality. UK Uncut activists are still challenging their convictions for staging a peaceful occupation of against tax evasion at Fortnum and Mason

Such developments have been strongly criticised by the UN Special



Alfie and Zak after their victory

Rapporteur on the rights of assembly in the UK who singled out the provisions of the public order act and "powerful chilling effect" of kettling as a serious hindrance to the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

One feature of this has been the use of the violent disorder charge against protesters (Section 2 Public Order Act) which carries a sentence of up to five years. As a result at least 12 young people spent time in prison for minor offences such as waving a placard stick at police lines. However the vast majority of students who pleaded not guilty were cleared by juries, pointing to the excessive and politically motivated nature of the charge.

Police must be held to account

Despite the success of students in fighting their cases, not a single officer has been charged with violence relating to the protests. The IPCC, for example, found the police had used "excessive force" against Jody McIntyre when dragging him out of his wheelchair on the 9 December, but ruled it was too late to prosecute.

The lack of accountability of the police stands in stark contrast to the criminalisation and persecution of its victims. It is part of a long history of

injustice from the Hillsborough tragedy and Orgreave to the ongoing scandal of deaths in custody. More than 1000 people have died in police custody since the 1960s yet in only one case (1969) has a police officer been convicted.

Alfie Meadows will now be campaigning to ensure that those responsible for his injuries are held to account. His struggle is important for everyone who wants to defend the right to protest at a time of unprecedented cuts and austerity.

We hope it will help strengthen other victims of police violence who are campaigning for justice. Alfie and Zak could not have sustained their fight without wide spread solidarity from fellow students, lecturers, trade unionists and justice campaigns. We appeal to everyone to redouble their efforts to ensure that, having won their cases, justice is done.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Invite Alfie or Zak to come and speak at your union/protest/campaign meeting - email info@defendtherighttoprotest.org
- Circulate this flyer and other relevant info about the case widely
- Affiliate to and support DtRtP. A motion can be downloaded here: (can we create a tiny url for the motion)
- Make a donation - press donate button on the website
- For updates on future meetings, events and protests check out the website.

Supported by



For more information about what you can do to support the campaign to to:

www.defendtherighttoprotest.org