

Letter received from Simon Chapman from Thessaloniki prison

Letter from Simon:

I am sitting in my cell - shared with 9 others (Greeks and Albanians). The other people arrested for the EU Summit are on the floor above so I only see them when the lawyers visit - as far as I know they are well, well as well as can be expected.

I'm not sure if people know what happened before/after my arrest so I'll quickly outline it here. The march set off in militant style and soon the air was filled with the sound of breaking glass. The first gas came in and in the crowd surge I lost sight of X. Me A and B continued on to a square where the gas started raining down - so far my goggles and half-face gas mask were working fine. The crowd surged again and I lost A and B, so I headed over to the rest of my affinity group. We ended up all squashed together with maybe 600 people, with clouds of gas coming from front and back, and my skin was starting to burn, my eyes were streaming. The crowd was all crushed together, people wailing for water for their eyes, pushing this way and that. Though I knew the safest place in that type of situation was in the middle of the crowd, I decided to go to the edge to see if I could see X, A & B. Then a huge cloud of gas enveloped me and I couldn't see a thing. So I'm at the edge choking, blind, on the edge of panic - a voice inside me is saying "be cool, be cool" and I kept it together. And then CRUNCH - everything went black and sparks of light shone in the darkness. At first I thought a badly aimed brick had hit me, but only a second later there was another bone-crunching blow to my head and I knew it was cops. I go to run but I'm already falling, scrabbling along the wall through broken glass, still blinded by gas; as I move the batons are raining down, sometimes 3 or 4 hitting simultaneously across my body. I feel boots kicking me as well. I thought I could crawl back to the crowd, but when I look up all I see is an empty smoky street and cop boots coming towards my face. BANG goes my goggles and glasses, and I realize I am in deep, deep shit. I try to get up but at that moment a hand comes down and pulls my cap and gas mask off and a final blow smacks me where my hair meets my forehead; I feel a splash of blood run down my face and everything goes black. I was only unconscious for a few seconds I think. I'm dragged to my feet, and boots and batons are still coming, mainly at my shoulders and legs. 5 cops have hold of me, dragging my rucksack off my back. They hold me and search it, then take me to the side of the road and sit me down. A cop comes up behind me and smacks me across the back with his baton, then kicks me at the base of the spine. This STILL hurts! My face is a sea of blood - I can feel it leaking from several places, running down my neck. C and D would have seen what happens next, the cops bringing the bags of molotovs to me. I can feel a fit-up coming on!

The next 2 hours are truly terrifying - I am cuffed with 2 bags of molotovs strapped to me. Some are leaking. The cops lead me into the road where rocks and molotovs are landing among us and present me to the rioters like I am a trophy. If one of these molotovs lands too close to me I would be a ball of flames faster than you could say "human rights". Over the next 2 hours I am beaten with batons, fists, a hammer; whacked across the head twice with a length of wood, head butted, kicked, slapped and constantly exposed to teargas. I could hardly walk or breathe. The whole left side of my back was purple, yellow, black, blue and I was covered in cuts, bruises and lumps. So it was quite rough! I never thought I would be so glad to finally get stuffed - well kicked - in a cell where 10 other demonstrators were languishing! Oh thanks be to God - I'm in jail! Safe from the psycho cops!

The rest of the story can wait, but I must say the solidarity of the prisoners kept me going. As far as I know, 5 of the 7 prisoners now on remand were in that cell with me, and we all supported each other. All things, food, water, cigarettes, phone cards - were held in common. I would not have kept my head together without them.

THANKS TO EVERYONE - GLOBAL SOLIDARITY - NO PRISONERS!