ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG
BRUSSELS OFFICE

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BEYOND POLICING

A HANDBOOK FOR COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS TO THE VIOLENCE OF POLICING IN WESTERN EUROPE

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The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung is an internationally operating, left-wing non-profit organisation providing civic education. It is affiliated with Germany's 'Die Linke' (Left Party). Active since 1990, the foundation has been committed to the analysis of social and political processes and developments worldwide. The Stiftung works in the context of the growing multiple crises facing our current political and economic system. In cooperation with other progressive organisations around the globe, the Stiftung focuses on democratic and social participation, the empowerment of disadvantaged groups, and alternative economic and social development. The Stiftung's international activities aim to provide civic education by means of academic analyses, public programmes, and projects conducted together with partner institutions. The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung works towards a more just world and a system based on international solidarity.

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RECLAIM HOLLOWAY PRISON

PART ONE

It had never been done before. Sisters Uncut had to figure it out by trying. Roadmaps for organising abound. Toolkits for coordinating action are less common, but can be tracked down with little effort. How-to manuals for breaking into a prison are, on the other hand, pretty much non-existent.

Before anything else, the building needed to be emptied. Holloway, an all-women prison, had closed one year beforehand. After shipping nearly every person incarcerated to rural jails, the massive 10-acre complex was left largely vacant. A technical advantage, albeit far from a meaningful win. The prison sat there, rotting from the inside out.

The visitors' centre, however, remained perfectly functional.

Security was a factor. Two guards still patrolled the grounds, day and night. Getting past them would require a diversion, a distraction of sufficient duration to allow someone to run inside and barricade the doors. Everything felt contingent, uncertain. This coincided with an emboldening desperation. On the day of the action, in thick mid-afternoon heat unusual for a London spring, the deck probably felt stacked.

But distraction there was, even if far from spectacular. A clamour. Fake drunks outside the visitors' centre. Spray cans in hand, perhaps graffitiing the prison's walls. Then, the first domino: the doors to the visitors centre opened. Security guards began trickling out. Stumbling around and provoking conversations, it turned out, was enough to keep each guard busy.

At last, the place was empty.

The theatrics continued and a group of Sisters began running, silent, onto the prison grounds. There was no assurance any of this would work. "It's not like we're these fearless people that go off and do these things," one Sister admitted. Adrenaline was high. "We were also anxious and scared."

Running equipment through the security guards' periphery, the Sisters split up. One group headed into the centre, eventually securing the doors. The other made its way onto the roof.

Somehow, so far, so good.

Hastily, a banner was unfurled and fastened. It read: Sisters Uncut Have Reclaimed This Space for the Community of Holloway. Purple and green smoke bombs went off. The Sisters' infamous colours billowed out, bringing to full bloom a moment of victory.

And then, things took an abrupt turn.

Counter-intuitive floor plans had unexpectedly upended things. One group was on the roof, without access to the ground floor. The other, on the ground floor, was stuck in a stairwell. In a matter of moments, the security guards would call the police. The colourful smoke triggered calls to emergency dispatch. A fire engine was en route. Time was running out. Adding to the drama, 200 people were due to arrive on a march. Forced to backpedal, the ground group went outside, in search of another entrance. Luckily, the day was unusually hot. A window had been left open. They climbed in.

Breaking into a prison is, at first glance, absurd. At second and third glance, even. Which leaves one asking: what could possibly bring this group of people – especially survivors of domestic violence or people

working in its midst, women of colour, and gender non-conforming people – to the point where such an action felt necessary?

The North London chapter of Sisters Uncut, a feminist direct action network, reclaimed Holloway for very good reasons. The prison had long been the site of violence against women. Most famously, right-to-vote activists in the early 1900s. Nearly 1,000 Suffragettes were imprisoned and force-fed in the cages of Holloway, then released and recaptured, time and again. These women were labelled terrorists. In 2010, the prison held migrant mothers, leaders of the hunger strike protesting against separation from their children at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre. Holloway was part of the strategy to diminish their ability to influence and organise other detained migrants (McVeigh 2010). Atrocious incidents like these were far from anomalies, but rather part and parcel of the punishment system itself.

In 1903, Holloway became the largest all-women prison in Western Europe, allowing carceral logic to take full flight. The reform that created all-women prisons, locking up mostly poor and working-class women for minor offences like shoplifting and prostitution, effectively expanded the prison system in Britain across the 19th century. By the end of its reign in carceral history, Holloway had played a critical role in legitimising the idea – fabricated by wealthy elites – that locking people away, rather than creating conditions that meet people's basic needs, would somehow create the social conditions that lead to public safety.

More than a century later, the fissures in that fabrication created Sisters Uncut. In 2010, Britain's Conservative-led government implemented intensely controversial austerity programmes, having gutted the social safety net – transport, housing, libraries, youth services, family programmes and sporting facilities, among others. As a result, low-income families and communities of colour were pushed further to the margins in the UK, unemployment skyrocketed, particularly for low-income youth of colour (Grahns 2018), and the country saw its first increase in infant mortality rates in two generations (Toynbee / Walker 2020).

Four years into austerity, community organisations were scrambling to triage needs. Some of the hardest-hit services were those supporting domestic and sexual abuse survivors. Up to 150 women were turned away on a daily basis (Butler 2017). Even worse affected were women in African, Caribbean and Asian communities. Alarming reports showed four out of five Black and minority ethnic women were turned away from shelters (Hanson 2016).

Between 2010 and 2014, more than 32 shelters shut down due to drastic austerity cuts (Andrews 2015). The outcry that followed led to the formation of Sisters Uncut in 2014. First established as a feminist direct action network to keep shelters open, they later developed punchy strategies – like taking over the red carpet at the world premiere of Suffragette – as a way of keeping up pressure on decision makers. Their demands, initially, were about protecting services. The kinds of services that survivors of domestic abuse and sexual

violence said they needed – shelters, access to decent housing, and benefits. Community groups were forced to step into the breach as the national closures kept on coming, and conditions seemed to be getting ever more desperate.

Politicians offered a response short on substance, quietly doubling down on long-standing, failed policies. The then Prime Minister Theresa May announced the Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill with a pledge to "take real steps in tackling domestic violence". It sounded good, but there was a catch. A big one. The bill was couched within her "hostile environment" policies, singling out Muslims and immigrants of colour (Abdul 2019). Rather than fully funding the services that supported survivors, the Tories used the bill to further entrench their own criminal punishment system reforms.

One of its hallmarks was longer sentences for abusers. Completely tone-deaf, given the needs articulated by survivors. What became painfully clear, on the other hand, was how longer sentences played into the "prison-building revolution". That year, the Tories were attempting to gain traction for building nine new mega-prisons, effectively expanding capacity by 10,000 places. Controversy ensued, as the project moved forward without public scrutiny or democratic debate (R. Roberts 2017). Sisters Uncut connected these dots: surviving violence is one thing at the personal level, but what happens when that violence is reproduced, or even compounded in the public sphere? What does it mean if the institutions people turn to for safety actually produce more harm? "You cannot be against violence and be okay with prisons," explained one Sister. "It just doesn't make any sense."

Meanwhile, Holloway Prison sat empty. The land would soon be sold off. Community members in Holloway braced themselves as the controversial property developer GVA – already linked to homelessness spikes in Manchester (Halliday 2017) – scrambled to fill this prime London real estate with luxury flats, which would be unaffordable to the majority of people from the area (Hyde 2015).

Affordable housing in Holloway was already a struggle. For survivors urgently fleeing violence, this reality was exacerbated, with only 27 beds available in nearby shelters. For those trying to stay in the borough, with the prospect of a longer-term placement, the picture was even more stark: around 10,000 people were stuck on the waiting list for council housing. As one Sister put it: "Over 50 percent of the people in women's prisons are survivors of domestic violence. We don't need more women's prisons and we don't need luxury flats. We need real support services for survivors."

Meanwhile, the mainstream media failed to report, or simply missed, these failures. Outlets mostly applauded May's "landmark" commitment. Meanwhile, in the domestic violence sector, some were refusing to take the bait. Critics tore into the bill for ignoring the needs of survivors while allocating further resources and power to policing. May responded by offering training for police officers sent on domestic violence calls. Would "more sensitive" policing be a viable solution? Sisters grappled with this question. Most concluded that the prospect of "nicer" police never actually materialises for communities of colour. Especially when it comes to survivors with an outstanding immigration issue (Abdul 2019).

According to the Independent newspaper, women of colour are two times more likely to be arrested by police for defending themselves than white women (Oppenheim 2021). Scratch marks on the perpetrator's neck are more often interpreted as marks of assault rather than wounds inflicted in self-defence. In England and Wales, 50 percent of police forces either arrest the survivor at the scene of abuse or pass their details to the Home Office to arrest them (GOV UK, n.d.). One Sister emphasised how this disproportionately breaks down along lines of race: "We know it's mostly going to be women of colour and Black women who don't call the police when they experience this violence." May's bill would make conditions even more difficult, as 84 percent of survivors do not even report assaults, many out of fear of or lack of confidence in the criminal legal system (Topping 2021).

Against this backdrop, Sisters began shifting their approach. As they did, the community took another hit. On 11 January 2016, Sarah Reed tragically died in Holloway Prison. A Black woman failed by multiple systems, in 2003 she had suffered the sudden loss of her infant. Lacking adequate support, the tragedy left her facing dire mental health challenges and eventual homelessness (Y. Roberts 2017). A white police officer brutally beat Sarah in 2012, after she was falsely accused of shoplifting (BBC 2016). Two years later, she was sexually assaulted in a psychiatric unit. She died in prison, while awaiting psychological assessments to determine if she could be held in prison. An inquest concluded that the state's neglect played a significant role in her death (Inquest 2017). Sisters

Uncut held candle-lit vigils outside Holloway Prison in her honour. Later, they would organise a public demonstration, explicitly highlighting the structural causes of Sarah's premature death.

All of this shook Sisters Uncut. Demands for funding started to feel inadequate if the violence and racism of the criminal legal system were going to remain in place. As one Sister put it: "It's not just about getting the care, services or charity. It's about how you come here and how we can organise together. Then, how will that become our resistance and how will that lead to healing for all of us?" Slowly, the organisation adopted an abolitionist mission, driven by intersectional and feminist values. Their anti-austerity mission birthed their abolitionist politics. Waiting for politicians to provide meaningful answers had come to feel misguided. Concessions from the government felt inadequate while femicides persisted – two to three women in the UK were still being murdered every week (Women's Aid, n.d.).

Community safety was still the group's goal. "Prioritising safety, in and of itself, is community defence," said one Sister. But Sarah's death pushed them to draw clearer lines around the root causes of harm. "That's not to say we only defend ourselves from the monsters within our communities," she continued, "but it's also understood that our communities are in that position because of these structures." When the closure of Holloway was announced, talk in the borough immediately turned to a community-led women's building. The possibility of reclaiming Holloway suddenly locked in. It was a chance to do something completely new. "We were going to create something that is led by us and it's for us."

For Part Two, turn to page 118.

SECTION I

UNDERSTANDING DEFUND

"The challenge of the twenty-first century is not to demand equal opportunity to participate in the machinery of oppression. Rather, it is to identify and dismantle those structures in which racism continues to be embedded."

Angela Y. Davis, author of *Abolition Democracy*

INTRODUCTION

The spring of 2020 saw some of the largest global uprisings in human history. Around the world, millions took to the streets in response to the police killing of George Floyd, a Black man, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.[1] What was initially a response to police violence in the US prompted a cascade of international reckonings. Across six continents and more than 60 countries, city centres convulsed with people connecting violence, racism and policing.[2] Countries like France, Belgium, Portugal and the UK saw their largest anti-racist protests to date. These rebellions were not solely an urban affair. Many rural communities joined the fray – sometimes for the first time. The unrest lasted for months and still continues.

Such moments of intensity inevitably ebb and recede. But they leave marks. 2020 saw more than a few collective turns etched into history. Among them, it would seem, was the realisation that the violence of policing is a *global* crisis, that violence takes many forms. Confrontations with that violence were similarly diverse, from the toppling of statues of slave traders and streets stripped of the names of colonial figures, to the proliferation of online #SayTheirNames campaigns that gave recurring visual rendering to the countless victims killed in police custody.

International media outlets scrambled to make sense of the moment's sheer geographical scale. Some opted to compare contexts. Unsurprisingly, most sought comfort in a sort of inversion of US exceptionalism: the conclusions that policing and racism are far worse in the United States than in any other Western country. This point seemed to end the conversation at its surface, but did little to erode the momentum of actual groups, organisations and movements. Rather, what often drove protests outside the US were long-standing demands against racist border policies, racial and ethnic profiling, the militarisation of police, and the expansion of police power in European society broadly.

1 The violence of policing in the US has claimed countless Black lives. Tony McDade, Sean Reed, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery are just a few people, among many others never mentioned in the media, who should still be alive.

2 For a global map of Black Lives Matter protests, visit http://creosotemaps.com/blm2020 (Accessed: 1 May 2021).

As politicians attempt to ignore those demands, and the movements voicing them, that choice represents a *decision* – the decision to ignore the *conditions to which such demands are responding*. In recent European history, that compartmentalisation serves to obscure a critical context: austerity measures over the last decade are *central* to any conversation about policing. Fiscal and budgetary cuts have ravaged welfare states in Western Europe, effectively abandoning vulnerable people, while providing tax relief for corporations and insulating the ranks of the wealthy. Still, in rare instances where police budgets were also cut, the policing of those same vulnerable communities has almost never seen commensurate reductions. Those hit the hardest by austerity are often the same populations most targeted by internal border controls – things like increased restrictions on access to public services – while anti-immigrant sentiment and racist violence proliferate.

Despite these worsening conditions – the after-effects of austerity, increasingly hostile border regimes, far-right power grabs – social movements for justice, in their various iterations, have grown While they vary widely, they share some common *points of ignition*.

Common Points of Ignition for Social Movements against Police Violence:[3]

Border Controls: when border policies and practices create harm or cause death.

> For example, since 1993, reports conclude that over 44,764 people have died interfacing with the militarised policies of Fortress Europe.[4] More recently, around 20,000 people fleeing war and poverty have lost their lives attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea into Europe since 2014 (Black 2020). While this crisis bears the fingerprints of agencies across the board, Frontex, the EU border agency with the largest departmental budget of €5.6 billion, has effectively blocked passage through the Mediterranean (Howden et al. 2020).

3 The Common Points of Ignition list is generated by the author. It is not exhaustive, and other points of ignition are discussed throughout the handbook.

4 For more information, such as a list of names of the people who have died and a map tracking deaths, visit http://unitedagainstrefugeedeaths.eu (Accessed: 14 May 2021).

Frontex stands accused of human rights abuses, including illegal "push-backs" (Statewatch 2020). What's more, the violence of border controls using ships and drones is continued in the interior of countries, through new private patrol cars and radars, while Frontex also takes part in deportations and assists in police department operations.[5]

Racial and Ethnic Profiling: when police arrest and detain a person or people based on stereotypes. The police later develop a crime narrative, as a retroactive cause for apprehension. This is a key way that legal decisions and policies leverage stereotypes, driven by political hysteria, which link race, ethnicity, language or national origin to criminality.

> For example, in 2017, a study conducted by the Defender of Rights on racial profiling in France found that people perceived as Black or Arab were 20 times more likely to be subject to police checks than white people (Radisson 2021). In January 2021, France saw its first class-action discrimination lawsuit on the basis of race and ethnicity (Connor 2021). Racial and ethnic profiling includes practices like stop and search, as seen in the UK, France and Spain (de la Serna Sandoval 2017), and is linked to deportation and violent displacement.

Police Violence Against Survivors: when police detain, arrest or kill a person or people experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence, if or when they are called.

> For example, in the UK, women of colour are two times more likely to be arrested for defending themselves against abusers than white women (Oppenheim 2021). Scratch marks on the perpetrator's neck are more often interpreted as marks of assault than wounds inflicted in self-defence (Day / Gill 2020).

> Related to but distinct from this is the fact that families and partners of police are more likely to experience domestic violence. In the UK, 829 cases have been reported against police officers since 2016 (Adams / Swann 2021).

5 For more information on what institutions and actors are involved in maintaining Frontex operations, go to https://abolishfrontex.org/take-action (Accessed: 14 May 2021).

Due to the "boys' club" culture, where police officers protect each other above all else, actual figures are presumed to be higher. Groups are also campaigning against "spy cops" and their use of sexual coercion and rape in social movement infiltration practices.[6]

> Inaction is another form of police violence. For example, Rita Awour Ojunge, a 32-year-old woman from Kenya, repeatedly reported sexual harassment in the Hohenleipisch refugee camp where she was held in the German state of Brandenburg (Schweighofer 2019). Her concerns went unheeded. In April 2019, she went missing. International Women* Space, a group based in Berlin, said that anti-Blackness in policing was a central reason why it took nearly three months for Rita's remains to be found in a forest just 200 metres from the camp.

Death in Custody: when police or state authorities hold a person or people who then die in state custody.

> For example, in 2005, a Sierra Leonean man named Oury Jalloh was picked up by police and shortly afterwards burned to death in the Dessau police station in Germany. His hands and feet had been tied to the wall and floor by the police. Officers maintain that Jalloh was somehow able to set fire to the fireproof mattress on which he was fastened.[7]

Far-Right Infiltration: when far-right actors, groups and movements exist within security forces. From this vantage, they recruit other state actors into their ideology, while using state weapons, intelligence and infrastructure to carry out activities.

> For example, in October 2020, Germany's domestic intelligence agency released a report on more than 1,400 cases in which members of the German security forces – police, military and secret services – took part in right-wing "extremist" actions, "posing significant danger for the state and for society". Of those, 377 cases occurred within police and civilian law enforcement agencies since January 2017 (Schuetze / Bennhold 2020).

6 For more information, visit https://policespiesoutoflives.org.uk (Accessed: 1 May 2021).

7 For more information on Jalloh's case and continued work for justice, go to www.ouryjallohcommission.com (Accessed: 1 May 2021).

More and more people are galvanised by these and other aspects of police violence. Some people are asking important questions, such as *what are the shared experiences of those targeted by policing across contexts*? This question inevitably uncovers answers, formed by people in groups and organisations, who are piecing together their experiences of police violence and creating demands together. Indeed, there are inspiring stories of people resisting the violence and racism of policing in Europe.

This handbook aims to raise the next set of questions. *How are people setting about dismantling the mechanisms of violence in their communities*? Naturally, tackling the most egregious instances of police violence is critical, but on its own is ultimately insufficient. This handbook looks to the places where people are coming together, not just to block the violence in existing approaches to security, but also to *build their own solutions*, from the bottom up, without relying on police or policing. Why are groups taking matters into their own hands to come up with solutions that will allow them to lead safer, more dignified lives? And how do those solutions prefigure broader approaches to safety for everyone?

Beyond Policing is for anyone who senses that the violence of policing targets certain populations, placed outside the established order. It is for anyone who recognises that the violence at the heart of policing negatively conditions all of our social relationships, and who knows that, while we are not going to win everything tomorrow, it is essential to work together, across our different movement locations, to create new ways of dealing with harm that actually make people safe.[8] Finally, *Beyond Policing* is for anyone who knows that the most effective demands not only change people's material conditions now, but also increase our chances of making new gains next year, in the next five years, and the 10 years after that. Now, more than ever, communities are poised to win victories against the violence of policing.

8 This handbook is intended for people working towards solutions. Consequently, a comparative analysis of traditional criticisms of abolition are beyond its scope.

WHAT IS POLICING?

A wide gap exists between the ideas of *what policing is* and what policing does, or the *actual practices* of policing in society. This gap leaves room for confusion and allows the role of policing, as well as a *culture of policing*, to go unchallenged. Creating clear and shared understandings of policing is therefore a crucial part of public and collective education work.

The following definition, and most core concepts in this handbook, come from Critical Resistance, a grassroots organisation based in the United States.[9]

Policing is a social relationship made up of a set of practices that are empowered by the state to enforce law and social control through the use of force.

When we understand policing as a social relationship, we begin to see that it is conducted through a **wide set of institutions**, from police unions to court systems, job centres, border agencies, private security, as well as the security apparatuses in social services and welfare institutions. By extending the definition of policing beyond individuals, or even the group called police, we are able to recognise how policing has come to *permeate most parts of everyday life*. Policing refers to this wide set of institutions, rather than groups of individual police officers.

Defining policing as a social relationship also makes visible its interconnected and corresponding parts. For instance, policing consists of a set of practices that is distinct from, but inextricably related to, another set of practices known as **imprisonment**. This includes jails, prisons, as well as permanent and temporary detention centres. Both policing and imprisonment rely on an additional set of practices in order to function, namely **state surveillance**. This comprises the methods of monitoring and controlling social life through, for example, facial recognition technology, corporate tracking services, data collection programmes, as well as forms of state repression of political work.

9 For more information and resources, visit www.criticalresistance.org (Accessed: 1 May 2021).

Another aspect to this social relationship is the complex societal agreements that uphold policing in its current form. The details of these agreements differ across contexts, but at their core lies the idea that the state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force and violence, and these are wielded against people ostensibly represented by democratic states.[10] By including all of these factors – *a wide set of institutions conducted through a set of practices that uphold societal agreements around force* – our understanding of what policing is becomes both broadened and refined.

Historical context is another part of understanding policing more fully. Policing has changed through time, often reacting to shifting political conditions. More specifically, policing has evolved as a set of practices that **keep oppressive social and economic relationships in place**. This can take the form of protecting private property, breaking strikes by working people, preventing people from sitting or sleeping in certain areas, preventing people from entering or exiting borders, restricting the right to protest, and repressing any work done outside capitalist markets, among other practices.

In other words, policing is aimed at **maintaining social order**. By following that historical thread, we see that the ideas underpinning social order are often connected to the same logic that built nations and created colonies, as well as carrying out enclosures, occupations and land dispossession. We chart the historical continuities between policing in Europe today and colonisation and authoritarianism, so that we understand its ability to change and adapt. This also breaks down the impression that policing is a fixed facet of society. Instead, such a definition invites those looking to decrease police violence to not only expand our understanding of policing but also to imagine what new choices and actions lie ahead.

10 The idea that the state reserves for itself the right to use violence as part of its exclusive policing power is often attributed to Max Weber's writings on the state's monopoly on violence. For an interesting application of this theory, see Correia / Wall 2018.

VIOLENCE OF POLICING

This handbook argues that policing is part of a wide set of institutions that contain and control certain communities, often racialised, low income, women and gender non-conforming people. The most obvious mechanisms that frame this violence include:

> Policing
> Imprisonment
> Detention
> Deportation
> Military interventions

There are less obvious forms of this violence, which persist hidden or obscured from communities who are not targeted. Those encountered every day, most often accumulated and compounded, include but are not limited to:

> Administrative and bureaucratic procedures
> Discrimination in finding housing and jobs
> Access to healthcare
> Daily stop-checks or controls
> Unreported incidents where police escalate minor infringements
> Surveillance

Discussion questions: Is violence inherent to policing? How do organisations representing people *historically targeted by policing* answer this question? Answering this question *collectively* will help determine what kinds of demands a group can make. Do calls for more protection from the police *decrease* police violence? Does asking the police to hold themselves accountable for violence *decrease* police violence? Do calls for more policing or "better" policing actually *decrease* police violence? Do calls for more policing actually decrease harm in communities? For more information about making demands that decrease police violence, see "Reformist Reforms vs Abolitionist Steps" on page 42.

CRIMINALISATION

Criminalisation is the process whereby actions become illegal and people get labelled as "criminal". Entire groups of people and communities are criminalised when targeted by policing. The *process of criminalisation* is an important factor within the wide set of institutions that make up policing. It is one of the tools that make it possible for police and courts to target specific actions, as well as specific groups of people, by setting up the belief that everyone who breaks the law is a direct threat to people and society.

Examples of recent criminalisation measures in Europe include:

> The creation of new offences that criminalise migration, turning migrants into illegal immigrants

> Anti-terrorist laws proscribing support for named groups abroad, which have criminalised the activities of communities, such as the Kurds and the Tamils in Europe (Mamon 2012)

> Recent laws across Europe that introduce new criminal offences of insulting the police or national emblems (Gill 2016)

> The use of stop and search and identity checks in Black, migrant or multi-ethnic neighbourhoods – this is part of the logic of criminalisation, as it targets such areas because of who lives there, rather than higher crime rates (Justice Initiative 2009)

> The creation of ethnic databases that collect information on specific racialised minorities, such as the Gangs Matrix database in the UK, which names young Black men, as well as illegal databases targeting Roma people in Sweden, first exposed in 2011 (Fekete 2014)

Criminalisation also adds to the myth that social, political and economic problems are best dealt with through law enforcement programmes, rather than social programmes. This encourages the idea that safety of all kinds – including economic security – can be guaranteed by watching, controlling and caging the groups of people who suffer the most, be it from poverty, racism or sexism.

"The constantly shifting nature of suspect communities, harbouring 'terrorists', 'gangsters' or 'foreign nationals', reveals the futility of searching for an ideal category of 'innocent' people deserving of protection."

Adam Elliott-Cooper,
author of *Black Resistance to British Policing*

"CRIME" VS HARM

Crime is a constructed category. What is considered crime changes over time and from region to region, sometimes very quickly. Those changes are often politically motivated and manipulate public fears, instead of responding to the issues at hand. Since crime is not a fixed or universal category, it becomes strategically important to talk about the process of criminalisation.

Crime is different from harm. Interpersonal harm is something that happens between individuals, whereas harm done by the state, given its power and impact, is sometimes described as state violence. The important point here is that harm between individuals can be addressed outside the criminal punishment system.

Importantly, interpersonal harm and state violence are linked. When harm happens between individuals, that harm is often exacerbated by the violence done by state and economic institutions in communities of colour, poor and other oppressed communities.

For example, most of those who are incarcerated have also experienced higher rates of domestic violence, unemployment, homelessness, mental health challenges, addiction, or even been expelled from school at a young age.[11] These are social problems. In other words, the harm people experience via state violence often exacerbates harm between people.

11 See Moore / Scraton 2014. See also: Women in Prison campaign: www.womeninprison.org.uk/campaigns/key-facts (Accessed: 1 May 2021).

It is important to note that interpersonal harm and state violence range in severity. For instance, things like not following through on a responsibility or yelling at someone can be harmful. These harms are different from killing another person or creating a system based on control and punishment.

Another important nuance here is the context of harm. For example, serious harms such as murder or rape are often preceded by a series of unchecked smaller harms – not being held accountable, not experiencing consequences, not seeking help. In other words, there were likely many previous chances to intervene before the serious harm took place.

At its core, this conversation points to accountability. What kinds of accountability models actually work? What kinds of consequences are both responsive to the harm and reflect our values? Accountability on all levels takes practice and commitment. That is why it is important for groups to strive to be accountable on all levels – in personal relationships, in community and in society. We need to address harm in our communities without relying on the tools and logic of the prison industrial complex, at every level. For more on community accountability, see "Alternatives and Experiments" on page 100.

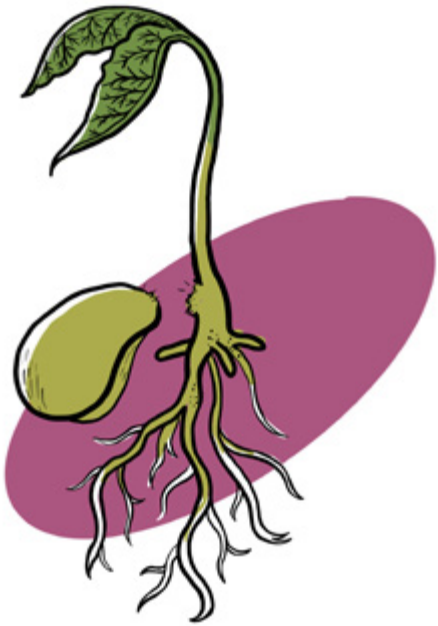
CRIMINALISATION OF HARM

Because crime is a constructed category, we can also look for ways that harm becomes criminalised. This distinct layer holds particular weight in the European context. Liz Fekete, Director of the Institute of Race Relations in London, describes how the legal changes in the field of immigration criminalise harms:

Article 31 of the Geneva Convention upholds the right of refugees to break domestic immigration law and enter a country illegally if their purpose is to seek asylum. But in the past decade, the EU's "war against trafficking" has meant new laws introduced across Europe that effectively undermine Article 31 and criminalise the act of seeking asylum, with asylum seekers treated too often as illegal immigrants.

Also in recent years, specific "crimes of solidarity" are an example of changing terms, whereby those who try to support refugees and migrants are prosecuted for aiding illegal immigration even though their motives were humanitarian. They are treated as though they were "people smugglers". Examples of this would be the prosecution of the captains and crews of search and rescue NGOs.

As Fekete notes, in both examples, individuals are responding to the "harms" created by the state, or state violence. The refugee is trying to escape the harm of forced displacement which is man-made harm (whether it be through war or climate change), while the individual acting for humanitarian purposes is trying to ameliorate the harm caused by the state's dehumanising and unfair immigration and refugee policies.



WHAT IS ABOLITION?

"Abolition is not merely obliterating the old, but making something new out of it. For example, a seed becomes a plant by ceasing to become a seed. But it isn't simply obliterated, it is transformed into something else."

Ruth Wilson Gilmore,
author of *Change Everything: Racial Capitalism and the Case for Abolition*

When it comes to decreasing police violence, abolitionist politics has a lot to offer. In particular, it offers a compass to locate what actually brings us closer to a just society, as we wade through the complex layers of (in the context of this handbook) police violence. In the words of Critical Resistance, abolition is both a practical organising tool and a long-term goal.

What does it mean to describe abolition as a long-term goal or broad vision? First, the vision of abolition calls into being the kind of society where all people are safe and can live safe, dignified, full lives (Rodriques 2021).

It can be hard to imagine such a world. While it does not exist on a broad scale, it does exist in new models of safety and organisation. Often these approaches emerge through community-based experiments.[12] Another aspect of abolition also means making more room for these alternatives to grow and thrive.

Abolition is not just about stopping jails, prisons, policing and borders, but also the work of getting people what they need to live a good life.[13]

Such a world would entail dealing with harm in new ways (Jaffe 2017). One component to this would require new-found levels of safety. In this way, securing basic needs is a core part of abolitionist politics. Things like free education, good housing, universal healthcare, meaningful work and healthy food for all people are essential (Elliott-Cooper 2020). Integral to these basic needs is the right to live in a world with a stable climate and healthy environment (Kushner 2019).

But what gets in the way of realising that vision? Critical Resistance points squarely to the prison industrial complex (PIC) as one of the major obstacles. They describe the PIC as the "overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems".[14] But what does this mean? Let's unpack it.

12 For more examples, go to https://defundpolice.org/organizing-resources (Accessed: 12 June 2021).

13 The specifics of border abolition are outside the scope of this handbook. For more information, visit the international campaign Abolish Frontex: https://abolishfrontex.org (Accessed: 12 June 2021).

14 Definition from Critical Resistance. Available at: http://criticalresistance.org/about/not-so-common-language (Accessed: 1 May 2021).


WAR ON DRUGS
PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS
POLITICIANS
PRISON INDUSTRIES
RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS
INVESTMENT BANKS
COURTS
LAW ENFORCEMENT
PRISON CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES
PRIVATE PRISONS
PRISON GUARD UNIONS
POLICING
SURVEILLANCE
SURVEILLANCE
POLICE BRUTALITY
VIOLENCE
DEBTS
INSECURITY
ABOLISH PRISONS
STOP POLICING OF OUR BODIES

To better understand "overlapping interests", we can ask: Who benefits from the PIC? Who are the players, the institutions, the groups that benefit? To better understand "surveillance, policing and imprisonment", we can ask: What are the systems of power that the PIC not only upholds, but reinforces? And what are the social problems that those tools are attempting to address? Who is most targeted by the PIC, both historically and today? And what are the impacts of that system of targeting?[15] Unpacking these layers is a process. Try it out with your group or organisation.

That the PIC gets in the way of actualising a more just version of society is one aspect. Another is that the PIC shapes the state iteratively – how the state functions, including its priorities and practices. In other words, the state has been re-formed in and through the PIC. This includes all scales of governance, from changes at federal level (new crime bills, new prison projects, national security, etc.) down to municipalities or towns (local police budgets, jail expansion, etc.). This point is significant: if the PIC operates at and across all scales of the state, then resistance to the PIC can similarly reflect that range and form.

With practice, the more we understand how the PIC operates, the more we have a lens for resistance. This informs the kind of abolition advocated by Critical Resistance, that of **prison industrial complex abolition**. This means fighting for a political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing and surveillance *and* enacting a practical policy programme that simultaneously creates lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment.

15 These questions are based on the Critical Resistance tool called "Concentric Circles". Available at: http://criticalresistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/PIC-Abolition-Concentric-Circles-front-back-handout.pdf (Accessed: 1 May 2021).

Although this handbook primarily deals with the violence of policing, it is important to see incarceration as something related to policing, not separate from it. As David Correia and Tyler Wall note: "To be arrested is to be captured, to be caught and deprived of bodily autonomy (that is, liberty and freedom), however temporarily or prolonged captivity might last. Arrest is not only a mode of state violence, but an initial and primary site of incarceration" (Correia / Wall 2018). When we look for connections, we see that prisons are the hard end of policing and incarceration begins with arrest.

What if more effort was put into interrogating how systems of punishment are exported and globalised, rather than fixating on the differences between the US system of punishment and those in Europe? Without a doubt, there are important distinctions, and of course certain kinds of information become apparent when comparing countries. And yet, the influence of policies and cultural ideas of punishment has never been confined within national borders.

This point is underscored by the fact that, by the 19th century, nearly all European prisons were based on the US prison model (Mahy / Vervaet 2019). Today, this model continues to dominate – through carceral ideology and prison-building mechanisms – the global economic market generally and penal sectors in European society in particular. This sets up a contradictory dynamic. On the one hand, outright criticism of US models is a rather commonplace position within EU bodies (Walshe 2012). On the other hand, the simultaneous importing of US models continues, as seen in the influence of American "supermax" prisons on European high-security units (Carlton 2008; Ross 2013; de Dardel 2016).

Importing, however, is not limited to influence. Privatisation is another import gaining ground in Europe. Since the 1990s, the majority of new prisons built in Europe have been based on public-private partnerships, first crafted in the US.[16] In this model, private sectors come fully equipped to design, build, finance, maintain and operate (DBFMO), while the state leases the prison.[17] While not all prisons have a high-security unit and some even offer organic meals, this image of progressive punishment does not change the industry and its impact through globalisation.

It is not hard to argue that prisons simply don't work (Bartle 2019). But what if we drew more complex pictures to understand how policing, detention and incarnation work together? PIC abolition helps us to do this.

Let's take the mass detention, policing and incarceration of migrant communities in Europe as a prime example. Here, PIC abolition can be used as an assessment tool to understand the interests at play, for instance the Frontex border agency, and the EU forces the agency is empowered by. PIC abolitionist politics also helps us place the technology they have at their disposal and the cultural ideas used in categorising migration as a "threat" and "criminal". PIC abolition can be used to identify which policies strengthen the system inside and outside Frontex and what points of intervention are needed to uproot the violence at its core. What's more, it points to experiments and alternatives, some of which are already under way, for more life-affirming and inclusive practices and perspectives on organising society.

16 In France: Rostello, C. (2012). New prisons financed by the private sector: DIY and debts. Available at: www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20121213.OBS2417/prisons-neuves-financees-par-le-prive-du-bricolage-et-des-dettes.html (Accessed: 12 June 2021). In Belgium: www.harenobservatory.net (Accessed: 12 June 2021). Prisons in private-public partnership. Available at: https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20121213.OBS2417/prisons-neuves-financees-par-le-prive-du-bricolage-et-des-dettes.html (Accessed: 12 June 2021).

17 "As in the United States, the prison [in Europe and globally] becomes a source of profit for multinationals, for construction firms, for food delivery, for new security technologies. It feeds around it a whole judicial apparatus, an army of guards, academics, architects, medical and social workers. For a part of the political class, it has become the ticket to an electoral victory. For a part of the press, it ensures their sales figures." (Mahy / Vervaet 2019) DBFMO is the most common type of contract in the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK. See Europris, for example: www.europris.org/file/europris-expert-group-report-public-private-partnership (Accessed: 12 June 2021).

Just as a seed becomes a plant by transcending the simplicity of its seed qualities, safety and security must transcend policing. We know that policing cannot be reformed in its own logic (Elliott-Cooper 2021b). As Audre Lorde reminds us, the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house (Lorde 1984). This then means that something else must take shape. Rather than maintaining policing as is, or pushing to improve policing solely by making it "kinder" or "gentler", PIC abolitionists argue for expanding the alternatives to policing, while dismantling its inhumane legacy. Most importantly, PIC abolition calls for genuine transformation, where those most impacted by policing are the very people who lead and shape the process.

"Police manage inequality by keeping the dispossessed from the owners, the Black from the white, the homeless from the housed, the beggars from the employed. Reforms make police polite managers of inequality. Abolition makes police and inequality obsolete." (Purnell 2020)

Derecka Purnell,
human rights lawyer, writer and organiser


anti-slavery movements 1800s-1900s Caribbean
Haiti
Anti-militarisation movement
decolonial movements 1800s-1900s
Pan-African Congress Movement 1920s-40s
Algerian Black feminist movement
anti-violence movement, care-work 1950s-1960s
Working-class and student movements in opposition to fascism and authoritarianism in Greece and Spain
Migrant labour struggles 1960s and 1970s "Abolish lagers" "Abolish borders"
anti-police uprisings 1960s-2020s
Brixton Liverpool uprisings
Villiers-de-Bel defence campaigns
Grunwick dispute
Rent strikers and housing rights
youth movements

Abolition is not a new concept. In fact, it is one of the oldest resistance movements in the world, tracing its roots back hundreds of years to struggles against slavery and colonialism. Importantly, these struggles were not confined to the Americas. Parallel histories unfolded in Europe and resonated in resistance to the slave trade, slavery and colonisation. The policing required for these projects did not stop in time or freeze in place. In fact, some of the military practices used to control colonies also migrated back to mainlands, informing policing tactics, such as mass arrests and counter-insurgency operations (Elliott-Cooper 2021a).

Picking up on the theme of historical continuities, Dr Vanessa E. Thompson, a lecturer and postdoctoral researcher at the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder), Germany, described these, as well as the international component of abolition movements. Thompson locates early resistance to European policing and forms of control in the rebellions against enslavement in the Caribbean.[18] Resistance included Maroon communities where enslaved Africans fled the confines of European law to organise their own societies. "We can also think of the Haitian revolution as a cornerstone of abolition, as it relates to Europe," she continued. Even as colonial priorities shifted over time, Thompson argued that the logic and many of the tactics taking place then "in the colonial laboratories, are now happening through colonial labour migration in the centres of Europe". This provides a foundation for understanding today's practice of state violence.

From people like Olaudah Equiano, Ellen Craft and Robert Wedderburn working to abolish slavery, to Communist organisers like Rosa Luxemburg striving to end imperialist wars, Europe also has rich anti-fascist and anti-authoritarian traditions. Significantly, each of these thinkers and organisers was condemned in their day. Indeed, the movements from which they came were targeted by the repressive arm of states. Even today, we can see this reflected in the student movements against police violence on campuses in places like Spain and Greece. These historical traditions help to contextualise abolitionist demands today. While the modern state and modern policing are rather different from those of the past, it is a mistake to obscure or remove these contexts. Indeed, it is a political decision.

18 "Abolition democracy", as conceived by W.E.B. Du Bois in his foundational book Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880, and later interpreted by Angela Davis, is another way to think critically about the struggles from which PIC abolition emerged.

"Abolishing prisons and defunding the police are [PIC abolition's] most prominent aims but opposition to border violence and militarism has also been important. Abolitionism locates policing and incarceration within a broader set of structures that includes borders and military violence deployed abroad."

Arun Kundnani,
author of *Abolish National Security* with the Transnational Institute

REFORM AND REFORMIST

While "reform" simply means a change, "reformist" refers to the kind of political leaning rooted in neoliberalism that maintains the current oppressive system. Here, the main idea is that the system is broken and needs to be fixed. This logic, and the insistence that the prison industrial complex is broken, supports its continued existence.

Reform, and reformist change, are ultimately about optimising institutions. Such optimisation *can* offer measurable relief, in the same way that first aid provides interim, emergency intervention. In both cases, more substantive, sustainable remedies are still required. When an institution is rooted in oppression and is designed to maintain the powerlessness and inequality of certain communities, optimising that system without any view towards long-term remedies and recovery will simply increase the system's ability to inflict harm and violence. For instance, police accountability bodies, that are in fact run by the police, most often facilitate and expedite cover-ups. Systemic transformation is required in order to uproot violence completely and end its hold over racialised and low-income communities, as well as women and gender non-conforming people.

"Vitally, abolitionist reforms aren't simply about welfare reform, replacing the hard wedge of state power with the softer power of state provision. Abolitionist reforms must be people, part of a process which erodes the power of police and prisons while empowering communities to provide for themselves and each other."

Adam Elliott-Cooper,
author of *Black Resistance to British Policing*

DEFUND THE POLICE

Budgets, in important ways, reflect the values of a society. Does a budget build up the social good or does it reinforce a culture of policing? One way to reshape societal values is to take money out of policing budgets, a tactic known as "defunding the police". At its core, this is a PIC abolitionist demand. It means reducing the size, scale, scope and influence of policing in society. Divesting from policing frees up resources, which can then be redirected or *invested* in life-affirming practices – counselling and education, free and accessible healthcare, resources to tackle homelessness and addiction, and so much more. What's more, these funds can be directed into community-based alternatives to policing, creating the kinds of practices that uplift communities. Hence, abolitionist politics and the social movement demand to defund the police are also anti-austerity politics.

Inevitably, calling police budgets into question poses a risk. Budget negotiations – without the clear intention to shrink the power of policing – could end up shifting money from one police budget to another. For example, taking money out of the special unit department is inadequate if that money is simply transferred to the "community" policing model, where police operate in everyday institutions that also have surveillance and data collection at their core. In other words, budget fights are important, but without a clear PIC abolitionist vision they run the risk of inadvertently strengthening policing. In addition to a broad vision, PIC abolition offers an assessment tool to create practical policy programmes. These four questions help to decipher the difference between reforms that strengthen policing and reforms that decrease the violence of policing, with the ultimate aim of making us safer by challenging violence at its root.[19]

- Does it reduce funding to the police?
- Does it challenge the notion that police increase safety?
- Does it reduce power, tools, tactics, technology that police have?
- Does it reduce the scale of policing?

19 These four questions are used in the "Non-Reformist Reforms" chart created by Critical Resistance and reproduced by Abolitionist Futures.

REFORMIST REFORMS

DOES THIS...	REDUCE FUNDING TO THE POLICE?	CHALLENGE THE NOTION THAT POLICE INCREASE SAFETY?	REDUCE POWERS/ TOOLS/TACTICS/ TECHNOLOGY POLICE HAVE?	REDUCE THE SCALE OF POLICING?
BUSS[1]	NO. It increases funding for training and consultants.	NO. It implies that stop and search improves community safety and can be used fairly.	NO. It maintains stop and search while creating a false impression of accountability.	NO. It reduced overall numbers of stops and searches, but increased the proportion experienced by people of colour.
COMMUNITY POLICING	NO. Police forces use it as an excuse to hire more officers and increase police presence in communities.	NO. It is based on the belief that the violence of policing is caused by a breakdown of trust with the community rather than policing itself.	NO. Police are trained in additional tactics and approaches, and given more tools.	NO. It targets 'low level' issues which funnels more people into the criminal punishment system, most often working class people and people of colour.
MORE TRAINING	NO. More training requires additional funding and resources.	NO. It is based on the assumption that the violence of policing is caused by a lack of training and 'bad apples', rather than policing itself.	NO. It increases the tools and tactics available to police as well as their capacity to use them.	NO. It often co-opts voluntary organisations into co-delivery and expands the social problems to which police are seen as the solution (e.g. mental health crisis).
NEW SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES	NO. Surveillance technology requires significant expenditure.	NO. It allows police to refine targeting, and gives the impression of objectivity while entrenching existing patterns of discrimination in policing and in society.	NO. It increases the technological footprint of policing, inviting the use of other technologies and tools.	NO. It creates the illusion of a more efficient police force while increasing police reach into people's lives.

DOES THIS...	REDUCE FUNDING TO THE POLICE?	CHALLENGE THE NOTION THAT POLICE INCREASE SAFETY?	REDUCE POWERS/ TOOLS/TACTICS/ TECHNOLOGY POLICE HAVE?	REDUCE THE SCALE OF POLICING?
BODY CAMERAS	NO. Equipping police officers with cameras requires more money for police budgets.	NO. They are pitched as making police more accountable increasing the idea that policing done right, makes people safe.	NO. They provide the police with another tool, increasing surveillance and increasing police impetus to acquire more gadgets.	NO. Despite multiple studies, there is no consistent evidence that they reduce police use of force – they simply increase police surveillance.
HATE CRIME LEGIS-LATION	NO. It increases funding for training and consultants.	NO. It reinforces the idea that harm is caused by individual people, rather than institutions, systems and cultural norms, and can be resolved by policing and punishment.	NO. Hate crime legislation is often used by police against communities of colour who already bear the brunt of policing.	NO. It often entangles voluntary sector/ community groups into working with police and diverts resources away from preventative measures.
DIVERSION PRO-GRAMMES	NO. They help facilitate police demands for increased funding and training.	NO. They reinforce the idea that police are a benign gateway to services and that police are a safe and approriate response to crisis.	NO. They increase surveillance and use of data to control and punish vulnerable people.	NO. They expand the remit of policing, while entangling service providers and voluntary orgs, when services could be provided without police involvement.

1 BUSS = Best use of stop and search scheme

ABOLITIONIST STEPS

DOES THIS...	REDUCE FUNDING TO THE POLICE?	CHALLENGE THE NOTION THAT POLICE INCREASE SAFETY?	REDUCE POWERS/ TOOLS/TACTICS/ TECHNOLOGY POLICE HAVE?	REDUCE THE SCALE OF POLICING?
WITHDRAW WEAPONS[1] 	YES. This can increase community-based budgets as money can be redirected away from tools that expand police capacity to exercise violence.	YES. This challenges the notion that we need armed police to keep us safe.	YES. Weapons, trainings and 'security expos' are used to scale up policing infrastructure.	YES. This reduces police capacity to inflict harm when coming into contact with members of the public.
SCRAP POLICING[2] 	YES. It removes costly infrastructure through which communities are surveilled as well as programme-specific police staff.	YES. It affirms that police are not the appropriate institution to address concerns for people who are at risk of violence.	YES. It reduces key tools and rationales that the police use to store data about people and as a basis for criminalising communities.	YES. It reduces the reach of police and surveillance tools in communities and institutions (e.g. universities, schools, youth programmes, etc).
LESS POLICE POWER[3] 	YES. When funds and resources to support police in exerting these powers are held back.	YES. By making clear that expansion of police powers are an inappropriate response to health and welfare concerns.	YES. It removes laws through which police power is expanded.	YES. By removing powers that increase the range of circumstances through which police can intrude on people's lives.
BUILD FIREWALLS[4] 	YES. When funds and resources to support police in processing this data and receiving/ making referrals to other agencies are held back.	YES. By making clear that police are not and should not be linked to essential health and welfare services.	YES. It takes away tools police use to surveil and criminalise people and communities and increases community access to essential services.	YES. It limits the ability of police to participate in multi-agency work and to entangle social welfare into policing.

DOES THIS...	REDUCE FUNDING TO THE POLICE?	CHALLENGE THE NOTION THAT POLICE INCREASE SAFETY?	REDUCE POWERS/ TOOLS/TACTICS/ TECHNOLOGY POLICE HAVE?	REDUCE THE SCALE OF POLICING?
REPEAL LAWS THAT CRIMINALISE SURVIVAL[5]	YES. A large amount of police resources are spent policing people in criminalised work or employment, people who use drugs and people with insecure housing.	YES. It challenges the idea that police presence improves the safety of working or living conditions for those criminalised.	YES. It reduces the channels through which police can come into contact with people whose survival is currently criminalised.	YES. It requires that health and welfare issues be addressed outside of policing.
SCRAP PRECRIMINALISING ORDERS[6]	YES. This can increase community- based budgets as money can be redirected away from tools that expand police capacity to surveil and criminalise people.	YES. It shows that police surveilling and criminalising young people does not make them safer.	YES. It removes tools that allow police to surveil and criminalise people at an increasingly young age.	YES. It reduces the reach of policing into young people's lives.
SPENDING ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, HOUSING[7]	YES. Diverting funding away from policing means more resources for health, education and housing.	YES. When we prioritise essential services, we create space to imagine more ways to ensure our wellbeing without relying on policing.	YES. Diverting funding away from policing decreases resources available for police tools and technology.	YES. Decreasing funding for policing decreases the size, scope and capacity of systems of policing.

1 Withdraw lethal / tacticstools e.g. tasers, pepper/pava spray, spit hoods and firearms
2 Scrap policing programmes /infrastructure that target specific communities e.g.Prevent, Gangs Matrix
3 Scrap, reduce and reject extensions of police power e.g. Coronavirus Bill, Section 60 Stop and Search
4 Establish firewalls between all data collected/held by essential services and the police
5 Repeal laws that criminalise survival e.g. drug, sex work, migration, vagrancy laws
6 Scrap the use of precriminalising orders i.e. Criminal Behaviour Orders, Knife Crime Prevention Orders
7 Prioritise spending on community health, education and affordable housing

This chart was created by Critical Resistance through different campaign and project efforts since 2009. Abolitionist Futures – a collaboration of community organisers and activists in Britain and Ireland who are working together to build a future without prisons, police and punishment – adapted that chart, and with permission, it is reproduced here.

Discussion question: How does the violence of policing manifest itself in your region? Because no two contexts are the same, it is important to address the particularities of that violence with those around you. Find the people with whom you share political commitments. Here are a few questions to support those discussions and deliberations:

GROUP DISCUSSION

> WHAT kinds of police reforms are being negotiated in your context?

> WHO is behind them?

> WHAT issue would create momentum for PIC abolitionist steps in your region?

> WHICH groups are already working around that issue?

> HOW might this chart look for your region or country?

POLICE EXPANSION

Since the 1990s, the power of policing has grown enormously in Europe. This has taken a variety of forms, from expanding police budgets and weaponry, to creating new special unit departments and tracking programmes. Policing has expanded far beyond the institution itself, recruiting institutions of everyday life into the project of social control.

One strategy of expansion is the institution of "**community policing**". First formed as a way of repressing Black rebellions against police violence in the United States in the 1960s, "community policing" models were imported to Europe during the mid-1990s (Jones 2002). This involved hiring more police to patrol in communities, increasing funding for equipment, and broadening categories of "crime".

In practice, "community" policing incorporates agencies through formal agreements.[20] The driving concept here is that of "preventing" crime. This compels doctors, professors, teachers and counsellors alike to identify "suspicious activity", make checks, and report to the police department or immigration offices. This strategy has effectively instrumentalised social services, such as job centres and immigration centres, as a tool of policing. Regular community members, as a result, become deputised, further expanding the social relationship of policing.

Another strategy for police expansion is **privatised security**. While some Western governments cut police funding in the wake of austerity, they increasingly favoured private security contracts instead. This reflects the growing European trend of private sector companies – such as Securitas AB and G4S – taking over public infrastructure (Ozkan / Stevens 2021). Shipping ports, airports, prisons, military and nuclear facilities, shopping and business centres, detention centres, among others, are now run by private security companies with little or no oversight.

20 In the UK, this is known as the "multi-agency approach".

Within the push towards privatised security, a growing reliance on surveillance technologies is emerging, exacerbating existing inequalities. For example, facial recognition and predictive policing programmes automate and intensify racially targeted policing (Williams 2018a). The expansion of policing – through privatisation and reliance on surveillance technologies – is becoming an important aspect of any set of demands against the expanding nature of police violence.

COMMON DEMANDS FOR ENDING POLICE EXPANSION INCLUDE

> End militarised policing programmes

> End gang enforcement and tactical units

> Get cops off campus

> End community intelligence gathering

> Make reparations for survivors of police violence

SHIFT THE DISCOURSE

Continual expansion has meant that policing has become a predominant feature of Western societies. That is why working within organisations that are part of larger movements is crucial to having a collective impact. There are a number of challenges in this work. Below are four common pivot points to shift cultural discourses around policing. Finding your own version, tailored to what works best in your context, will be key.

FOUR MYTHS ABOUT POLICING

MYTH	FACT	MEANING
Police prevent crime	Policing responds to calls after harm has occurred or Police apprehend a person and find a crime later	Police do not actually increase safety, but rather manage and order responses to harm or Police presence also often causes further violence in their reactions to interpersonal harm
There are a few "bad apples" or police wrongdoers who cause harm, but the rest are good	Individual actions are the result of structural police decision-making. This is what policing actually looks like	When the media focuses on "exceptional" violent moments of policing, movements must assert a counter-framework that the violence of policing is its typical nature
We need better policing (training, body cameras, bans on restraining methods, etc.)	To date, reforms focusing on more police, more training for police or more equipment for police have not decreased police violence, even when actually implemented	Fighting for police reform is largely about negotiating concessions and perpetual waiting. Alternatives to policing, that actually make people safe, are available and possible now
Policing can be reformed	Reforms have not stopped police from targeting, harming or killing people, especially Black, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people (Boffey 2021 / Greenfields 2015) Minor tweaks to the way police look or operate are not going to address the violence of policing	Decreasing police violence means decreasing the size, scope and influence of policing. It also means decreasing the contact between policing and communities

RACIST VIGILANTISM AND PARAMILITARISM

Extralegal actions, or actions taken outside the bounds of the law, most often by groups of white men, in order to "protect" themselves and society against racialised "foreign intruders". These actions can result in the premature death of racialised people and people from immigrant backgrounds.

Example: In 2017, a German lieutenant named Franco A. was stationed in Illkirch, where, in his free time, he frequently disguised himself as a Syrian refugee (Gebauer et al. 2019). Using a fake name with immigration authorities, Franco A. fabricated a backstory to initiate the asylum application process, during a peak moment of backlash against immigration in German society. He was arrested at Vienna airport while attempting to retrieve a gun from a toilet and ultimately charged with terrorism. According to Friedrich Burschel, an expert on the German Right and neo-Nazism at the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Berlin, these actions suggest that he was planning to "incite an uprising of Germans who have to defend themselves against intruders" (as anti-refugee and anti-immigrant narratives term it) (Moore 2021). Later, this lieutenant was found to have extensive connections to far-right and militarised "prepper" groups – underground organisations actively preparing for violent confrontation.

There are growing examples in Europe of networks within both the police and military engaging in racist vigilantism. But whether carried out by state or non-state actors, racist vigilantism is also an act of policing. It serves the same function: to use force and violence to reinforce oppressive social, economic relationships, and maintain social control. Far-right activity in policing structures in Western Europe is increasingly coming to light. This points to the fact that the structural racism inherent in policing provides the ideal conditions for far-right infiltration to flourish within its ranks (Moore 2021).

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The first section of the handbook is packed full of politics, analysis and examples from many different countries that illustrate the scope of this work. Before exploring more stories depicting how organisations are in conversation with these politics, take a moment to review this glossary. Some terms might be familiar, while others are new. It may be useful to review this glossary with others in your political community. Together, deliberate on what these terms as a collection point to.

Austerity

"[F]rom reduced workers' rights to cuts to public services, combined with an assault on longstanding civil and political rights necessary for liberal democracy – [austerity works] as a whole to shift the entire relationship between citizen and the state, and undermine 'the spectrum of human rights'." (McRobie 2013)

Black

"The way that people of African descent describe themselves in countries such as South Africa, the US and parts of Europe. IIn the UK [and other Western countries] the term was also used (and can still be) in a political sense by other minority ethnic groups, especially Asians, who feel that their common experience of racism outweighs cultural differences." (Institute of Race Relations, n.d.)

Carceral

"The 'carceral state' describes the governing and legal institutions, as well as the policies and practices that organize and enact capture, punishment, and policing. The carceral state normalizes gendered antiblackness and racialcolonial violence while simultaneously maintaining these as the foundational conditions required for social order and racial capitalism. The contemporary carceral state shapes dominant notions of peace and safety through 'law and order' rhetoric and policy. This makes things like the weaponization of the law, the asymmetrical violence of policing, and cultures of gendered racial criminalization not exceptions, but fundamental functions of the state. The carceral state maintains order by isolating and immobilizing targeted people and communities. This 'carceral' incapacitation includes but is not limited to: jails, prisons, detention centers, psychiatric facilities, parole, probation, electronic monitoring, public registries, and databases.

The contemporary carceral state is deeply historical; it inherits, updates, and deploys the carceral structures of the slave ship, plantation, frontier, and apartheid order as part of its current approaches to captivity." (Critical Resistance 2021)

Community Accountability

"[A] process in which a community – a group of friends, a family, a church, a workplace, an apartment complex, a neighbourhood, etc. – works together to do the following things: create and affirm values & practices that resist abuse and oppression and encourage safety, support, and accountability; develop sustainable strategies to address community members' abusive behavior, creating a process for them to account for their actions and transform their behavior, commit to ongoing development of all members of the community, and the community itself, to transform the political conditions that reinforce oppression and violence; provide safety & support to community members who are violently targeted that respects their self-determination." (Incite, n.d.)

Criminalisation

The process through which actions become illegal and people get labelled as 'criminal'. Entire groups of people and communities are criminalised when targeted by policing.

Deportation

"The forcible expulsion of someone from the country – usually for criminal offences or suspicion of terrorism, but also for breaching immigration laws (technically termed administrative removal). Those who have been deported are prohibited from returning." (Institute of Race Relations, n.d.)

Detention

"The confining in prison-like conditions of those arriving in the [country] to establish their identity or nationality or the validity of their asylum claim. Others can be detained for an indefinite period, following refusal of entry or of asylum, pending their removal or deportation." (Institute of Race Relations, n.d.)

Dignity

"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." (United Nations 1948)

Domestic Violence

"[A]n incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members. The abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or financial. Domestic violence is overwhelmingly experienced by women and perpetrated by men." (Sisters Uncut, n.d.)

Femicide

"Femicide, the killing of a woman or girl because of her gender, usually by a man, is the most extreme form of gender-based violence." (Rodriguez 2020)

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT)

"[N]omadic people previously known as Romani, generally thought to have moved to Europe from the Indian subcontinent in the ninth century. Roma and Sinti people are sub-groups of Romani. Irish Travellers are a distinct nomadic people of ethnic origin from Ireland." (Institute of Race Relations, n.d.) 'Gypsy' is a debated term. Some communities self-identify as GRT. (Gypsy, Roma, Traveller) However, while some communities have reclaimed the term, others have not because they consider it politically incorrect.

Interpersonal Accountability

Being able and choosing to respond to and be responsible for our experience and our impact.

Intersectionality

Developed by Black feminist activists and scholars like Audre Lorde, Jackie Alexander or those in the Combahee River Collective, intersectionality is a way of thinking about race, class, gender, sexuality and immigration status together (Coleman 2019) In 1991, Black law scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw popularised the term in "Mapping the Margins", describing how multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage are compounded and create obstacles and differing access to power within existing societal structures. (Crenshaw 1991)

PIC Abolition

A political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment.

Policing

A social relationship made up of a set of practices that are empowered by the state to enforce law and social control through the use of force.

Prison Industrial Complex (PIC)

"[T]he overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems. Through its reach and impact, the PIC helps and maintains the authority of people who get their power through racial, economic and other privileges. There are many ways this power is collected and maintained through the PIC, including creating mass media images that keep alive stereotypes of people of colour, poor people, queer people, immigrants, youth and other oppressed communities as criminal, delinquent or deviant. This power is also maintained by earning huge profits for private companies that deal with prisons and police forces; helping earn political gains for 'tough on crime' politicians; increasing the influence of prison guard and police unions; and eliminating social and political dissent by oppressed communities that make demands for self-determination and reorganisation of power in the US [and around the world]." (Critical Resistance, n.d.)

Racial Capitalism

"[Cedric] Robinson challenged the Marxist idea that capitalism was a revolutionary negation of feudalism. Instead capitalism emerged within the feudal order and flowered in the cultural soil of a Western civilization already thoroughly infused with racialism. Capitalism and racism, in other words, did not break from the old order but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of 'racial capitalism' dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide. Capitalism was 'racial' not because of some conspiracy to divide workers or justify slavery and dispossession, but because racialism had already permeated Western feudal society. The first European proletarians were racial subjects (Irish, Jews, Roma or Gypsies [sic], Slavs, etc.) and they were victims of dispossession (enclosure), colonialism, and slavery within Europe. Indeed, Robinson suggested that racialization within Europe was very much a colonial process involving invasion, settlement, expropriation, and racial hierarchy." (Kelley 2017)

Racism

"The state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death." (Wilson Gilmore 2007)

Refugee

"According to the UN Refugee Convention, a refugee is a person who is outside their own country and is unable or unwilling to return due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social or political group, or sexual orientation." (Institute of Race Relations, n.d.)

Self-Determination

The right of a people to determine their own future and allegiances free of outside interference from a colonial or occupying force.

Strategy

A clear plan containing a series of goals in a defined and intentional order to move towards our vision.

Survivor

"[Refers] to those who have experienced or are experiencing violence and abuse […] [N]ot everyone who experiences or has experienced abuse defines themselves as a 'survivor', and […] society may determine who is allowed to identify as one. Not everyone does survive domestic, sexual, gendered, and/or state violence; we remember those who haven't in our fight." (Sisters Uncut 2018)

Toxic Masculinity

"A set of behaviours and beliefs that include suppressing emotions or masking distress, maintaining an appearance of hardness, and violence as an indicator of power. Toxic masculinity instils cultural lessons that have been linked to aggression and violence, leaving boys and men at disproportionate risk for school discipline, academic challenges and health disparities, including cardiovascular problems and substance abuse." (Salam 2019)

White Supremacy

"An interlocking system that upholds inequity, led by elites with the near full participation of less privileged white people, who also get limited access to power. It is also the process of chronic exclusion that involves violence against equality, fairness, justice and freedom." (Moore / Tracy 2020)

NOTES / IDEAS

NOTES / IDEAS

SECTION II

CASE STUDIES AND INTERVIEWS

There are no absolute blueprints for PIC abolition. There are, however, guideposts and inevitable crossroads. This section looks at five countries in Western Europe – Portugal, Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium and Northern Ireland – and explores *how* groups relate to the core components of the demand to divest from policing and invest in community-led solutions.

The countries chosen were based on the collective projects highlighted in this section. Importantly, there are countless initiatives against police violence, and yet, not all groups or campaigns are moving in the same direction, let alone towards PIC abolition. While the components of Defund are outlined in the previous section, the following pages look at projects that are practising towards Defund, by experimenting in these two things: collective work that *decreases the power* of policing and engages in *community-led solutions*.

The case studies that follow show how people are organising against different aspects of the violence of policing. In Portugal, we see how policing is used to effect spatial displacement and connects to the ongoing struggles against colonialism. Similarly, legacies of war and colonialism play a critical role in reconstructing policing in Northern Ireland. In Germany, we see how increased and militarised policing has intensified as part of the backlash against immigration. Those same themes are picked up in Belgium, where people on the ground work to dispel the myth that more police mean more safety. In Manchester, we see how policing impacts the everyday lives of youth of colour, as the city attempts to place more police agents in schools. Because data on police violence can be difficult to find, let alone compare, these case studies begin with stories from the people on the ground.[21]

21 Waiting for accurate data on police violence is a fool's errand for a number of reasons. It presumes police are reporting their actions regularly, accurately and from an anti-racist standpoint. It presumes databases can be easily integrated or compared across law enforcement jurisdictions, on regional, national or international levels. It might also presume a state's political will to do something about it. Moreover, a number of countries, including France, Germany and Belgium, do not track demographic information in police interactions, making it difficult to "prove", from the state's perspective, who is being targeted and how. This means we cannot rely solely on the data that states do or don't provide. Having state-legitimised data alone does not decrease police violence. As we see in the Manchester case study, impacted communities can generate their own data and organise campaigns against police power through that process.

A perhaps obvious point to note here is that there are variations in approaches to policing in different countries, relating to the particularities of its history, political model and national traditions. Despite this, there are many commonalities – as models of policing across Europe increase their cooperation – suggesting that the violence of policing is certainly a pan-European issue.

As you read, you'll notice a wide range of vantage points in how people engage the divest/invest framework. Some instances are still in germination. These are captured through interviews, highlighting the context that groups face and questions they are asking themselves. Other initiatives are well under way, or even 20 years down the road. These are captured through stories of groups working on a particular campaign. This range is an asset. Importantly, readers can see how this work builds over time. It also shows how organisations and campaigns can be strengthened by PIC abolitionist politics, from applying it to their work for the first time or building their work from that framework explicitly. In this way, this section intends to underscore the accessibility of abolitionist politics, in that it is possible for groups to begin wherever they are, working on localised solutions within a global crisis of police violence.

Lastly, the case studies and interviews that follow are snapshots of context and perspective. As you read, bear in mind the discussion questions from the previous section. How might the people in the stories, who are the ones most often impacted by policing, answer those questions? Remember, there are no formulas. As you study, bring with you the spirit of possibility in pursuing collective solutions from the bottom up.


Northern Ireland
Manchester, UK
Berlin, Germany
Brussels, Belgium
Lisbon, Portugal

LISBON, PORTUGAL

In Portugal, the colonial wars that officially ended in 1974 still shape much of social and political life in the country. Portuguese and foreign African descendants are more likely to experience inadequate housing and ongoing immigration struggles. According to the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, these same groups are most targeted by police (Henriques 2018). In 2018, Portugal ranked the highest in Western Europe for reported cases of police violence (Henriques 2019). National debates over stripping the immigration services of their policing powers continue. Meanwhile, the far-right populist party Chega gained significant political ground in the 2020 presidential election.

"Bearing in mind the structural problem of police violence in our society, we demand: less investment in police, more in social policies," reads the first charge. Published in *Publico*, a leading Portuguese newspaper, it was read across the country. After months of anti-racist protests and repeated police scandals, a seismic shift in resistance was under way. Typical calls for police reform – to prosecute "bad apples" or pass more anti-discrimination laws – remained, although muted. Filling that space was the unprecedented call to defund the police. In December 2020, 27 organisations and 109 people signed an open letter aimed at tackling the root causes of police violence in Portugal (Open Letter 2020).

Eleven months beforehand, Eduardo Cabrita, the Minister of Internal Administration and member of *Partido Socialista* (Socialist Party), announced plans to hire 10,000 new security force agents (Sapage et al. 2020). For those on the ground, this was a bad sign emblematic of a growing trend. The government had doubled down on equipment just the year before, with "983 vehicles delivered, 12,279 weapons distributed, and 304,111 items of personal protective equipment delivered, including 3,179 ballistic vests" (Sapage et al. 2020).

What's more, Portugal already has one of highest percentage of agents in the EU, a record it would undoubtedly surpass with Cabrita's latest proposal. The increase in policing made little sense to most. The move also stood in stark contrast with Portugal's ranking as the third most peaceful place in the world (Portugal News 2017a). Despite this, the proposal to increase policing focused on "security forces, fire prevention, and immigration policies over the next four years" (Sapage et al. 2020).

Controversy flared, at multiple levels. When challenged by other members of parliament, Cabrita justified the move. Specifically, he connected the plan to the country's "security image" – a priority that corresponds with attracting tourism, and in particular, business tourism (Sapage et al. 2020). That relay between tourism and the national security image is a significant plot point.

In 2015, business tourism and foreign investment were crucial hallmarks in the strategy to effectively dislodge the country from the grips of austerity (Goncalves 2018). Since then, Portugal's economy has not only recovered but boomed (Alderman 2018). In fact, Cabrita's retort included references to major events hosted by tech companies in Portugal, such as the Cybersecurity Summit in 2019 and Web Summit in 2020. At the same time, another dynamic was under way – an Airbnb takeover. In recent years, countless buildings in Lisbon have been bought up by institutional and small-scale investors. The result is a small-scale real estate bubble, creating jobs for some while also pushing out other essential workers (Paddison 2020).

But not everyone has benefitted from these strategies. Long-time residents and low-income communities are facing a series of new crises, namely housing evictions, land disputes and displacement (Minder 2018). Boosting policing, it seems, is part of a wider move to secure new-found economic growth for some, at the expense of others.

The open letter drilled down on this last point. "The question has to be asked: why so many police?" Here, the authors leveraged the interplay between budget and values. "What kind of society is it where public expenditure on 'public security and order' is 37 times higher than that on housing and collective services (€3.272 billion vs €87 million in 2018)?" (Open Letter 2020). In this way, budget fights become a stage for social inequities writ large.

But beyond budgets, the activists connected the fact that more policing means more people imprisoned. Unsurprisingly, this saga is already reflected in the country's carceral system. Portugal has one of the "highest incarceration rates and the longest sentences" in the EU15 (Open Letter 2020). It also leads the EU in rates of prisoner suicide (Portugal News 2017b). The significance of this argument extends beyond numbers, begging scrutiny of whose lives are most heavily policed and incarcerated. And there, Portugal is not unique: the criminal punishment system disproportionately incarcerates immigrant, Black, Roma and Traveller communities, as well as poor communities (Gorjão Henriques 2017).

Getting ahead of the discourse that "more police mean more safety", the open letter asserts that "the greatest weapon against police violence" is redirecting resources "to social policies, namely to housing, employment, health and education" (Open Letter 2020).

Next, the open letter makes a strategic move by including the immigration apparatus in the understanding of policing. "We demand the elimination of all state mechanisms that institutionally criminalise immigrant, Black, Gypsy and poor communities, by creating a specific police apparatus." Here, the authors honed in on the Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF), Portugal's immigration department.

First formed in the 1990s, the SEF was created within the logic of "Fortress Europe" which conflated immigration and criminality (Esquerda 2020). This, according to *Esquerda*, has created a "great imbalance between its police and investigative component and its administrative component for processing the legal integration of each immigrant in the country" (Esquerda 2020).

This "imbalance" was at the heart of national debate for most of 2020. In A particular focus was the trial of three SEF agents for the unlawful murder of Ihor Homenyuk, a Ukrainian immigrant, at Lisbon airport. Jose Gaspar Schwalbach, the lawyer of Homenyuk's family, described his work in repeated cases against the department. "My aim is to abolish the service and change the law," he said when asked about the violence of the institution in a *Reuters* article (Waldersee / Demony 2021). This incident, among countless others, laid bare the brutal nature of the SEF (Gorjão Henriques 2020a). After months

of outside pressure, politicians proposed plans for the "eventual shutdown" or "remodelling" of the department in December 2020 (Jornal Económico 2020). This opened political space to ponder what comes next (Gorjão Henriques 2020a).

Quick to jump in on the SEF scandal was Portugal's far-right populist party *Chega* (Enough). The party's leader, André Ventura, used the agent's murder trial as an opportunity to ramp up false claims about rising crime rates, referring to Roma and Afro-Portuguese people (Junior 2021). This narrative was leveraged to fan flames of hostility during the 2021 presidential election. Even though Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, the centre-right candidate, was re-elected, Ventura gained a staggering 12 percent of the vote (Agence France-Presse 2021). Beyond SEF scandals, *Chega* garners media attention with far-right anti-establishment and racist tropes. "Portugal is not racist," read Ventura's banner at his reactionary protest to the largest anti-racist demonstrations in the country's history (Alberti 2020).

Overt racism, as manifested by Ventura, has run rampant with the support of mainstream media. Some outlets have taken a somewhat softer approach, referring to institutionalised racism as a "myth", while others describe racism within the confines of a distant colonial past (Algarve Daily News 2020). Portugal's widespread cultural reticence to address racism is a significant hurdle, particularly in the search for solutions to police violence (Alberti 2020). But this very challenge can simultaneously galvanise anti-racist movement.

With placards that include messages like "Racism is colonial heritage", anti-racist organisers, some of whom are the children and grandchildren of those who organised the resistance to colonialism, are spelling out the continuities between Portugal's colonial history and the state institutions that exist today (de Sousa 2021). As Mamadou Ba, Director of *SOS Racismo*, explained: "There's a certain right-wing elite who are trying to glorify the colonial past. They're well aware that people of colour are getting more of a voice in the media, and so this is part of their strategy to undermine the rise of anti-racist politics." (Algarve Daily News 2020). While far from grassroots organising, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

has underscored his point. In 2016, the UN body criticised the persistence of "Afrophobia" and institutionalised racism in Portugal (de Sousa 2020).

Meanwhile, new models for immigration control are being proposed (Esquerda 2020). Most involve attempts to reshuffle – rather than decrease – existing police power. "Those policing functions are not going to evaporate, but simply be transferred to other already existing police forces," said a signatory of the open letter. "And equally predictably, both the other police forces want the extra work, but only if they can get extra funding to hire more cops" (Open Letter 2020). This public debate serves as an opening that activists can leverage.

While the range of calls for police reforms widen, efforts such as the open letter push for PIC abolition. In so doing, they question everything that maintains the logic of the SEF, from policies such as "Sensitive Urban Zones" to the infrastructure at the hard end of those policies, such as prisons, detention facilities, deportations centres, as well as "Temporary Installation Centres". The open letter called for the abolition of "these mechanisms, which allow the systematic suspension of citizenship rights" (Open Letter 2020).

Efforts to pursue justice – be it from racist police or vigilante attacks – tend to come up short. In fact, the one SEF agent convicted in December was the first in 10 years. While Portugal technically has penal codes that make both racism and hate crimes punishable by law – a stark difference to "colour-blind" countries like France (Diallo 2018) – these laws are rarely enforced. "In practice, Portugal's capacity to process cases as racism or hate crimes is practically zero," Christina Roldao, a Black rights campaigner and sociologist, told *Al Jazeera* (de Sousa 2020). This consistent lack of political will to take meaningful action is part and parcel of the grassroots call for PIC abolition.

Underscoring this point further is a series of cover-ups and wilful neglect by state institutions (Gorjão Henriques 2020b). One critical example was the criminal case against police from Alfragide, a district of Lisbon. Seventeen agents stood trial for brutalising six people from the Cova da Moura neighbourhood. The police practices uncovered – falsifying documentation and testimony, aggravated kidnapping, bodily harm, and even withholding of heart medicine required by one of the victims – contributed to a more widely felt atmosphere of distrust in the police (de Sousa 2019). In turn, activists have demanded

"stricter investigation and real legal consequences in cases of violence, abuse of force, including racial and xenophobic discrimination in the police", as well as an investigation of agents with records of racism and xenophobia – be it through action, inaction or concealment – followed by "their immediate expulsion" from government employment (Open Letter 2020).

Lastly, the open letter concludes in the spirit of the global online #SayTheirNames campaign. Here the authors link the tools of policing with the lives taken prematurely by police violence. "We demand a limitation of the forms of repression legally available to the police" (Open Letter 2020). In practice, that would include the following:

- Ban the use of armoured cars, such as those that Magina da Silva [National Director of the Public Security Police] demanded to intervene in the neighbourhoods and at the NATO summit in 2010.
- Prohibit the use of lethal weapons in policing that led to the deaths, among others, of António Pereira (Toni) (2002), 17-year-old Ângelo Semedo (2001) and 14-year-old Elson Sanches (Kuku) (2009).
- End the systematic use of drones, surveillance cameras, and quick intervention pickets in the suburbs [where mostly immigrants, the descendants of immigrants, and Roma live], whose classification as Sensitive Urban Zones has turned them into "war zones".
- Prohibit the use of keys around the neck, ventral placements or strangulations, such as the one used by agent Carlos Canha to violently "arrest" Cláudia Simões.
- Likewise, advocate the prohibition of shooting cars in motion and other techniques with evident lethal risks that, in Portugal, led to the deaths of Carlos Reis (PTB) (2003); Nuno Rodrigues (MC Snake) (2010); Paulo Jorge, a 13-year-old Gypsy killed by Hugo Ernano (2008), currently one of *Chega*'s leaders and still working for the National Republican Guard (GNR); and Ivanice Costa, a Brazilian woman, killed after 40 shots were fired at the vehicle she was driving (2017).

The open letter was short, but undeniably clear. A stark message, backed with a robust series of links to ongoing scandals and cases of police violence, the letter undoubtedly marks a shift in anti-racist resistance in Portugal.

Meanwhile, tensions on the ground continue to escalate. In March 2021, *Chega* launched a campaign to deport the head of *SOS Racismo*, Mamadou Ba, despite the fact he is a Portuguese citizen. As people form collective defence committees on Ba's behalf, the core argument of the open letter remains as salient as ever: racism must be rooted out.

As the letter concluded: "The fight against systematic state violence against immigrant, racialised and poor populations is waged by going to the root of the problem: more social policies, less police violence" (Open Letter 2020).

BERLIN, GERMANY

In Germany, policing is more suspect than ever. Officially, 1,400 cases of far-right racist activity have been reported within Germany security structures – police, military and secret services (Schuetze / Bennhold 2020). The extent to which far-right networks flourish in policing continues to unfold. For instance, in June 2021, the SEK elite police group that was forcibly disbanded for unconstitutional activity was reportedly investigated in connection with the racist attacks in Hanau that targeted people with Turkish and Kurdish migration backgrounds (Maus 2021). Political leaders, such as Horst Seehofer, repeatedly deny the structural racism of policing, a claim at odds with a 2017 UN working group on people of African descent (UN Human Rights 2017). Documenting the existence and impact of racial profiling is a task for civil society organisations, since the state does not collect demographic data in police interactions.

INTERVIEWEES

Biplab Basu is a counsellor for victims of racist police violence in Berlin. He has supported and empowered victims of racial discrimination and their families through countless grassroots initiatives for decades. In 2002, he founded KOP, the Campaign for Victims of Racist Police Violence. His work focuses on institutional racism in the criminal legal system in Germany.

Johanna Mohrfeldt is a social worker in Berlin and an early member of the KOP campaign. Her work focuses on institutional racism and racial criminalisation in the criminal legal system.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR WORK AND HOW THAT RELATES TO POLICING IN GERMANY?

Basu: ReachOut is a counselling centre for victims of right-wing, racist and anti-Semitic violence and threats in Berlin. We help people to find legal and emotional support when facing such violence. Over 30 years of this work, we have come to see policing as a major problem in these attacks. That is why we also advise victims of racial profiling and racist police violence, for instance, about how German police operate against Black people, minorities, Muslims, and so on.

Mohrfeldt: KOP is different. We first formed as a legal aid fund to support victims of police violence in taking legal action. We also began collecting the reports of people who experience or witness racist police violence. We turned this into a campaign that publishes these accounts as counter-narratives to what the police report. In Germany, there is a real problem regarding the belief that the criminal legal system is objective and somehow not part of the wider racist structure in society. Complaints against police violence are rarely, if ever, investigated. We wanted to empower the people that have faced racist police violence in Berlin. KOP also trains people to become bystanders or witnesses, to observe and report racist police controls and practices. For the person facing racist harassment, to have a witness makes a real difference. It also provides tools that enable witnesses to stop just being observers, and instead, to intervene.

WHAT ASPECT OF POLICING DO YOU THINK IS MOST HARMFUL TO COMMUNITIES?

Basu: Over the last 30 or 40 years in Germany, the police have increasingly been kitted out with modern weapons. We now have police officers who are almost as well-equipped as soldiers on the battlefront. Every time there is a movement in society – not a movement against the police, but rather any kind of social movement – we find an escalated reaction from the police. The government and politicians then back this up with the narrative that police need more resources, more equipment, more technology. The underlying message is also that society needs more police. These increases always result in more policing of communities of colour, especially on the pretext of criminal gangs, Roma criminal gangs, and so on.

Mohrfeldt: Politicians and police potentially criminalise almost every part of the lives of migrants, Black people and visible minorities. We see this in the reports again and again. If there is a car accident, for example, involving a white person and a person of colour, police would immediately criminalise the non-white person for their action. They would question the white person first, would take their complaint first, and so on.

We also see a serious problem in the concept of community policing. From the early 2000s, police have been more and more involved in the so-called social services. Police are keen to have constant contact with school authorities, street workers, counselling centres for drug users, institutions running youth welfare services, youth clubs, local grassroots initiatives in the districts of Berlin, and so on. They behave here like casual friends, not investigators. But actually, in all these settings, racial profiling is happening. All these are now places where police collect information and nobody knows what it is used for. It is only white people who can have such deep trust that the police are not doing harm; meanwhile, the officers get the data they need to create a new suspect. Anyway, the official reason is to have police in all social institutions in order to prevent crime, but this idea has had a perverse effect. The monitored community is now the partner of the police.

HOW ELSE DOES POLICE VIOLENCE MANIFEST ITSELF?

Mohrfeldt: For us, racist police violence shows up in many ways: in stop and search operations in public, in talks in schools by armed officers wearing uniforms, in racial harassment while talking to members of the BIPoC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) community, in using unnecessary force and threats in routine police situations, in arresting and taking data from people without a clear legal foundation, and, at its worst, in beating people up, kicking and, of course, killing non-white people.

If a police incident gets "out of control" and the victim's report is kept out of the story, the mainstream media tend to report the story from the perspective of the police officials. One reason is – besides the effects of institutional racism within media institutions themselves – that police reports are a so-called "privileged source" that journalists don't have to scrutinise (Deutsche Tageszeitungen, n.d.). In effect, the media spreads police lies throughout the city.

This plays a massive role when, for example, people are killed by the police. In the last 20 years, many mentally challenged white people have been killed by the police (Peter / Bednarczyk 2017). The media demonised all the victims, based on police information, as being a serious threat to the officers, who had to defend themselves. Tragically, the easiest and most professional way

to defend themselves was to kill the person, as if these armed police feared for their lives.

At the same time, when police kill a person of colour, the reports say the victims were armed and had knives on them. We have many witnesses that did not see knives or don't know about knives or say that there were no knives. One of the most famous cases in Berlin involving such an accusation is the killing of Hussam Fadl. Despite this, the police and media have successfully created the image of Black or Arab criminals with knives. This also ties in with the image of threatening refugees and terrorists. It fits with the reports of the police.

WHAT SPECIFIC CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND AROUND RACISM AND POLICING IN GERMANY?

Basu: In Germany, there is a firmly entrenched idea that the police are protecting the constitutional law. When the police create problems, the narrative is "a few bad apples", or the biases of individual officers. They get away with this idea because, in Germany, racism is associated with theories of individual prejudice. The scientific community developed such terminology. If racism is only an individual problem, you don't need to change much structurally. It works well for the police. For them, it is smart to keep the conversation here because structural and institutional racism explains society quite well, in terms of how society is divided. Until very recently, it diverted our attention, preventing us from thinking about racism as something very important. Now we have been able to say that the police is a racist institution.

That said, the term racism was not used in Germany, I would say, until the late 1990s and early 2000s. Politicians would talk about xenophobia or this very German term *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* [hostility towards foreigners]. The police rhetoric focused on gangs, and *Kriminalpolizei*, or criminal investigation units, were set up to deal with them. When East and West Germany were unified in the 1990s, there were widespread attacks against refugees and migrant homes and shelters. These events forced people to think about racism not just as an individual phenomenon, but as a social phenomenon. The police did

not respond to those attacks. This highlighted their role, which is not actually about preventing harm to all people.

Before this, in the 1970s and 1980s, it's important to say that the police were an important part of criminalising migration. They created new ideas and practices, such as the "misuse of asylum". That was a very popular racist concept that was used to give more power to policing. This persisted because racism was not on the civil rights agenda in Germany at all. That is why we've been working to make it clear that you cannot have a civil rights movement without taking up racism as a central topic.

At the same time, work to address police violence is nothing new in Germany. The left political movement in Germany has been very critical of police and policing. But this movement has traditionally been dominated by white people with no concept of racism. Racism was completely left out of the equation, and those involved could not understand the role of the police in communities of colour. By rejecting the police outright in this way, you end up with a situation that ignores how policing targets communities of colour.

HOW DO YOU RELATE TO THE DEMAND TO DEFUND THE POLICE IN GERMANY?

Basu: At first sight, it doesn't seem to fit the German context. And yet, defunding has been a government policy since the start of capitalism. More recently, the health department has been defunded, which is why we had such trouble during the coronavirus crisis. The same goes for the early education departments that have been in place for the past 20 years. The government is constantly defunding. They make these decisions at the expense of ordinary, poor people in society. Meanwhile, they increase the number of police, equipment and weapons, and so on, for the protection of the rich. So, defund is already a policy, but it is on their terms.

WHAT FALSE SOLUTIONS TO POLICE VIOLENCE ARE YOU SEEING?

Basu: In Germany, we have the whole question of an independent oversight body. Under the system of *Polizeibeauftragte* [police commissioners], the idea is that the police will monitor and regulate themselves. I think it is a counter-productive effort. It will of course generate a lot of hype when they launch it, but after a while public attention will wane. Everyone will forget about it. There will be no advancement in actually changing policing practices or resources. People will still be suffering the same way they were before.

WHAT KINDS OF COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?

Mohrfeldt: We are fighting for a civil rights perspective that sees racist police violence as a violation of everybody's civil rights. One of the topics we are intervening on is the racist criminalisation of selling drugs. The selling of drugs gets criminalised, while the buying is overlooked. At KOP, we are calling for a different approach to the situation, rather than punishing the sellers, given that the conditions that lead them to that practice are incredibly difficult. We propose solutions based on ideas of public health. We are trying to remove all these police agents from parks. We want fewer police. Instead, we are putting in social workers, or calling for shops where people can legally buy drugs. We think that social workers are a better response than police.

We want everyone to understand the role of policing in society, and in particular, how policing impacts social services. The role of the police, supposedly, is to catch criminals. The role of social workers is to support the people that society has made vulnerable. But, as things stand, social work has become a means of criminalisation. Why do they cooperate with an institution of criminalisation? We need social services that actually empower people, rather than benefit from their cooperation with police. We want to create civil networks that put values into practice, an anti-racist network that actually supports people's everyday lives.

MANCHESTER, UK

While most British policing has been conducted outside the mainland, in recent decades policing inside mainland Britain has focused on gang policing, a political campaign that creates multiple crises through law and order as well as immigration. Stop and search practices have increased by a third in recent years (Walker 2019). Black people are nearly 10 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people. As a result, the prison population has doubled, with Black people in the UK more likely to end up in prison than Black people in the US (Kentish 2017).

"If you were in charge of education budgets," the survey asked, "what one thing would you prioritise for funding?" People were eager to respond. Teachers, parents, youth workers, residents and youth alike all weighed in. To date, this was the largest survey of its kind in the United Kingdom. More than 554 people living and working in Greater Manchester finally had a say about the role of policing in their schools.

The survey was triggered by a disturbing cause. In February 2020, a Freedom of Information Act petition revealed a behind-the-scenes measure in the city's policing agenda: around 20 new police officers were to be stationed in Manchester schools in the upcoming academic year.

Community groups sounded the alarm. This news had a particular sting. For years, austerity cuts to mental health services, youth facilities and affordable housing impacted low-income communities and communities of colour (Bulman 2018). Gaps created by dwindling social support were being filled with policing. What's more, it was happening covertly. Later, a report entitled *Decriminalise the Classroom* would find that 95 percent of parents, teachers and youth were never consulted by the city and had no chance to deliberate over the policing in schools (No Police in Schools 2020).

Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester and member of the Labour Party, and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority were behind this surprise. Burnham had recently organised an action plan that focused on "knife crime" incidents (Greater Manchester Combined Authority 2020). A 2018 police-funded survey seemed to corroborate his approach, citing a

26-percent increase in the public perception that "knife crime" is a serious problem (Ofsted 2019). But this was far from the whole picture.

According to the BBC, incidents of "serious violence" on school grounds are "extremely rare". Moreover, those that do occur are largely due to an "absence of properly funded local services" (Sellgren 2019). In fact, research shows that police in schools do little to prevent violence (Kamenetz 2020). Rather, they are associated with an increase in rates of exclusion (Williams 2018b) while contributing to a culture of low expectations (No Police in Schools 2020). This, in turn, creates a vicious cycle, where more punishment and policing are justified. All signs indicated that the Mayor was more concerned about continuing the Labour Party's "tough on crime" legislation than responding to the actual needs so clearly present in schools (No Police in Schools 2020).

What were the community's priorities? The survey spoke volumes. When given the options of "counsellors, youth workers, teachers, teaching assistants, other, or school-based police officers" for funding priorities, two thirds of respondents chose counsellors and youth workers. Concerning the Mayor's top choice, community responses were clear: nearly 90 percent of people surveyed felt negatively about policing in schools. Tellingly, when asked about funding priorities, not one young person chose more police.

Prior to this, Roxy Legane worked with youth in Manchester as a member of an organisation that helped young people to challenge class inequality. Within that space, for youth, particularly Black youth, there was a need to unpack their experiences of race and racism. From that work, she started a listening project that quickly became much more.

In 2018, she founded Kids of Colour, a community platform for young people of colour to explore their experiences of race, identity and culture, and challenge the everyday institutionalised racism that shapes their lives. As more young people shared their stories and gathered together, a recurring theme emerged: the violence of policing.

It became clear that stop and search was a daily part of these kids' lives. Not only are they being stopped by police after school, but now inside school as well. According to the *Decriminalise the Classroom* report, police are "dispro-

portionately" based in schools primarily attended by students of colour and students with working-class backgrounds. For those that responded to the survey, policing in schools largely meant exacerbating existing inequalities.

Most youth already believe that they are stopped because of racism. "Often, the kids feel gaslit. They know police in schools isn't okay, but it became normalised. To have a community behind them saying, no, it's not okay – it's empowering," said Legane. That empowerment matters, as reforms further entrench policing in schools, adding to the concern of an underlying government war on Black youth (Nijjar 2020).

Roxy knew that more could be done. Soon, Kids of Colour paired up with the Northern Police Monitoring Project, another organisation building community resistance to police violence in Manchester. Together, they formed the No Police in Schools campaign.

No Police in Schools created a context-based strategy. Since Mayor Andy Burnham built his plan around the idea of "preventing youth violence", they developed counter-messaging. They argue that holistic services for youth of colour – carried out by trained counsellors and youth workers from the community – are the solutions to youth violence, not more policing.

The backbone of Burnham's plan rested on vague support from teachers. "This proposal extends our existing neighbourhood policing approach into schools if a headteacher requests it," said Bev Hughs, the Deputy Mayor. "It will only happen if a school asks for support" (Prescott / King 2020). Clearly, teachers had a significant role in the matter. That's when campaign organisers began meeting with Black teachers in the North West Black Members Organising Forum, who organised inside the National Education Union (NEU), the UK's largest trade union of teachers, lecturers, support staff and teaching assistants.

It wasn't long before the teachers' union went public. Vik Chechi-Ribeiro, a secondary school teacher and Vice President of the NEU Manchester chapter, wrote in the *Guardian*: "The UK has one of the largest average class sizes in Europe, and over two-thirds of school heads have reduced the number of teaching assistants and pastoral support to save money. This has left

schools struggling to support vulnerable students with behavioural needs." He continued with a public call to make the classroom a place of learning again. One sure way to do this, as Chechi-Ribeiro asserted, is by "building an anti-racist education system in which police have no place" (Turner 2019). This position gained traction with other teachers. Around 30 percent of the teacher union districts passed motions against police in schools in Greater Manchester (Legane 2021). In other words, the campaign had effectively leveraged the contradiction between state employees and the local government.

As Kids of Colour continues, they turn to the people who have the most at stake. One key demographic is teachers, and outreach is centred on teachers in the union as well as through workshops. The hope is to build an anti-racist majority of teachers in the area. "When teachers start to think about institutional racism and how it plays out in schools, then they can clearly see why police shouldn't be in that space," said Legane. The presence of anti-racist teachers is a significant challenge to the legitimacy of Burnham's claims about the desire for policing in schools.

Youth, however, are the focus. Kids of Colour is dedicated to supporting young people. One mechanism they've developed is collecting reports of racism from students. This emerged after school channels forfeited that work. "Schools don't consider most complaints legitimate. They want a form with a date for every incident. You cannot date every time a teacher has called you a gang member on the playground, or the more systemic issues that exist," explained Legane. "Racism just doesn't work like that." Parents also play a critical role in the ongoing work. Kids of Colour gives parents forms, questions and advice on how to contact their schools about policing. This work is building up a map of police in Manchester schools, creating community-driven data about what police are doing, and in which schools.

"It feels like we're having an impact," said Legane. It doesn't matter that the Mayor hasn't responded to the *Decriminalise the Classroom* report. They believe the No Police in Schools campaign is creating collective power in Manchester. Some people have asked Kids of Colour to work with the police to help them become less racist. But they aren't interested: "We won't work

with the police. We don't believe they should be policing our communities." In fact, Kids of Colour is supporting youth to study abolition so that they can use it more widely as an organising concept. Legane explained how important it was to give that agency to young people, as a way to "bring a group of young people together". As for the organisation, Kids of Colour keeps a steady focus on what is working: getting resources to the youth and the people in their lives, so they can make their own decisions.

"It's easy to do if everyone is fighting for the same point of anti-racism," said Legane. Kids of Colour is building strong connections with organisations across the UK, such as No More Exclusions, the 4Front Project and Stopwatch. They're also working with groups in Scotland and through the international network of police-free schools. When asked what keeps her in the work, Legane replied: "There's a sense of unity and people want to support one another."

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

In Belgium, resistance to police violence is inseparable from the country's colonial legacy, in particular the atrocities in what is now called the Democratic Republic of Congo. Countless statues of King Leopold II were removed during the summer protests against police violence in 2020 (Casert 2020). Years of police killings have garnered attention from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (The Brussels Times 2021). The lack of infrastructure available to the public to document police violence has led to debates on filming the police (HLN 2018).

INTERVIEWEE

Rachida Aziz is a community-builder. She founded the Azira clothing line and supports Le Space, a laboratory and try-out room for the cultural centre of tomorrow in Brussels. Rachida also authored Niemand zal hier slapen vannacht (Nobody is going to sleep here tonight) (Aziz 2017).

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR WORK AND HOW THAT RELATES TO POLICING IN BELGIUM?

I work with the "headquarters of the movement". We coordinate with different movements to develop local strategies that meet people's basic needs. It is a grassroots approach. We're building systems of support because we need alternatives as the current systems are falling apart.

I'm an artist and I bring politics, culture and art together to make change. Just last week, we organised an event with a series of artists from different disciplines, all creating works around police violence. This is part of our strategy to change culture and narratives through art.

Right now, a lot is changing around how people in Belgium see police violence. We're part of that shift, showing how policing is a danger for everyone, especially people who are undocumented, but also white people from Belgium.

WHAT ASPECT OF POLICING DO YOU THINK IS MOST HARMFUL TO COMMUNITIES?

In Belgium, undocumented people are the number-one victims of police violence. It often looks like racial profiling. The police go into migrant communities looking for ways to brutalise people. There are many cases of police beating up young people, and doing so in ways that leave little evidence. Whether people are documented or undocumented, the police have developed methods to brutalise people of colour.

For example, on 24 January 2021, there was a protest against police violence in Brussels. Around 150 people showed up, but the police ended up arresting 245 people. They grabbed anyone who was a person of colour in the area. Out of the 245 people arrested, 87 were minors – young people, no older than 12 or 13. They were arrested, which must have been confusing and scary. They spent the whole night at the police station. They were brutalised there, while parents were just waiting outside going completely crazy. When their kids finally did walk out of the station, they were covered in bruises.

This is only one example, but there are many more. That is why we are working to file a joint complaint at the state level against the police. In particular, we're focusing on the official organisation *Dienst voor Politionele Slachtofferbejegening/Service d'assistance policière aux victimes*, which supports victims of police violence. In Belgium, if you've been attacked by the police, the only option is to turn to this organisation for legal and emotional support services. But this organisation is run by the police. This is a huge problem. The families of the victims of police violence say again and again that going to the police for support is traumatising.

We try to show how policing breaks communities apart from society as a whole. The police do not protect us from danger. No, they are the danger. So, that's what we're working on, getting more people to see that, including white people, to see how the police institution does not work in their favour.

HOW ELSE DOES POLICE VIOLENCE MANIFEST ITSELF?

When we talk about police violence, it's important to acknowledge that such violence happens inside the police as well. Reports show that one in four female police agents has testified about sexual harassment from their colleagues. That number says a lot.

For people socialised as female, we know how hard it is to come to the point of speaking out against harassment, assault or abuse. So, if one in four have testified, we know that there are probably a lot more who just haven't spoken out yet.

WHAT SPECIFIC CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND AROUND RACISM AND POLICING IN BELGIUM?

The police have a lot of power in Belgium. For a long time, the police would always get support from the government. This is starting to change, but we don't know how far. Different parts of society are shifting on the matter.

For example, the national mainstream media, who are completely dominated by the right wing, have even aired, for the first time ever, a report on the weekly programme *Pano* about police violence against Black and Brown people in Belgium.

At the same time, when state institutions do acknowledge that the police are out of control, they usually explain it away as a case of "bad apples". They also say that the police have been infiltrated by fascist groups. This makes the problem about individual people, rather than policing as a whole. We're working to push back on this narrative. The danger isn't individuals, it is policing itself.

It's also important to understand that Brussels and Europe are the belly of the beast. Some people in Europe like to talk about how bad policing is in the United States, but that's not where it started. The systems that underpin policing – white supremacy, imperialism, capitalism, patriarchy – those are all European projects. America is just one bastion of that European project. The history of abolition has had 400 years to develop in the United States, with

the resistance of the Global South inside the Global North. In Belgium, we've only had that for half a century. But we are changing things fast, so I hope it won't take 400 years!

HOW DO YOU RELATE TO THE DEMAND TO DEFUND THE POLICE IN BELGIUM?

Before, I mentioned our complaint against the *Dienst voor Politionele Slachtofferbejegening/Service d'assistance policière aux victimes*. One of our demands is to take their funding and use it for an organisation set up by family members of those who have experienced police violence.

We need to be building new organisations that will serve people's needs. The best way to support that growth, I think, is to defund the police. What if organisations existed that were led by survivors of police violence? They know what kinds of support actually work. That is why we are working with survivors to build up that organisation as a more legitimate entity to meet people's needs.

We also need organisations that can help homeless people when they're on the street; we need organisations that help people that are addicted to drugs, rather than criminalising them. That is what the police are doing. If we stay with policing like this, it means we won't have the alternatives that can mean something to people, actually address people's needs.

One very important thing to achieve as fast as possible is to disarm the police. In Belgium, we don't have the right to carry weapons, which is a good thing. Police are the only ones entitled to have a weapon. Police have the state's permission to threaten or take lives with weapons. Reducing harm by taking away police weapons, I think, will be an important step.

WHAT FALSE SOLUTIONS TO POLICE VIOLENCE ARE YOU SEEING?

For a while, the police tried to create the image that they were diverse. They made a big effort to recruit people of colour in Belgium into policing. Of course some people joined, but it didn't last long. A lot of people of colour subsequently left. This means the police in Belgium are mostly white. I'm not sure, maybe that's something that's different than elsewhere in Europe.

Another way the police try to make themselves look better is by engaging in conversations with people from poor neighbourhoods. They are systematic about it. The police are everywhere in these neighbourhoods, places like Anderlecht, Molenbeek and Schaerbeek. It's hard to see, but there are some people of colour in those neighbourhoods who encourage this. They actively bring the police into the neighbourhood for personal ambition, not community safety.

WHAT KINDS OF COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?

Right now, especially since the coronavirus started here, a huge network has grown to get food to people. There is a lot of poverty in Belgium. People are having a hard time getting regular, nutritious food here. Since the government isn't doing it, regular people have come together to create this network, working very hard to feed people. I would like to see more mutual aid projects like this, especially around decriminalising drugs and addiction.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ireland was Britain's first colony. Since the founding of the Irish Republic and formal partition in 1921, Northern Ireland has been incorporated into the United Kingdom. As such, the historical legacy of policing in the North is deeply rooted in militarism and colonialism. Consequently, policing became bound up with militarised intervention. The British Empire had long used Ireland as a testing ground for colonial policing, and as a result around 3,500 people died in the war from 1969 to 1998 (Roger 2010). From operational techniques and methods of surveillance, to racialising threats and refining criminal justice structures, many of these experiments were exported to other British colonies. In the 1980s, some of these same techniques were deployed in British cities to repress urban uprisings and Black political movements (Elliott-Cooper 2021a).

Events in West Belfast over Easter weekend 2021 were beamed around the world. Young men and boys, their elders in the background watching on, threw missiles across the peace line that divides the Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist communities around the Shankill Road from the adjacent Catholic, Nationalist, Republican communities around the Falls Road. The communities are divided by a high peace wall, with intersecting roads gated whenever tensions rise. For those outside the communities, particularly internationally, it appeared that the city was beset by riots. In fact, the violence was restricted to localised yet tense areas. The Police Service of Northern Ireland, formerly the Royal Ulster Constabulary, although armed, stood back from the violence, which claimed multiple casualties.

For those watching from afar, it seemed to mark a resurgence of the conflict in Northern Ireland, a return to the three decades of military occupation, bombings, displacements, and the killing of 3,600 men, women and children in a population of approximately 1.6 million people. The communities most affected by the conflict were those with the highest level of deprivation. In 1998, negotiations between political parties in the North, and the UK and Irish governments, resulted in the Good Friday Agreement and the foundations for a democratically elected Northern Ireland Assembly with devolved powers.

Since then, aside from brief suspensions and two periods of direct rule by the British government, the Assembly has been responsible for exercising its devolved powers. In 2010, this was extended to include policing and justice. What actually took hold was a new approach to safety, reimagined from the bottom up. Central to these developments was a commitment to "justice reinvestment", which included, within communities of high tension, community-based alternatives to policing. Such alternatives were not only encouraged, but actively *funded*. Yet, as recent events demonstrate, the excellent work that informs their interventions and community-based support cannot completely resolve the tensions within communities with histories of bitter division.

The road to alternatives was long and fraught. In 1916, with Europe embroiled in war, the Easter Rising led to civil war in Ireland, ending with the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. "This legislation," explains Professor Phil Scraton of Queen's University Belfast, "purposefully established six of the nine counties of Ulster as Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom to assure a Protestant majority – had the remaining three counties of Ulster been included, the North would have had a Catholic majority." In 1921, the Anglo-Irish Treaty created the Irish Free State and eventually, in 1949, Ireland/Eire became a democratic republic.

"In the six counties," Scraton goes on, "there was no transition from war to peace, from conflict to normalisation, as 'special' or 'emergency' powers to deal with conflict became embedded in legislation. This led to internment without trial, discriminatory policing of Catholic, Nationalist, Republican communities by a Protestant, Unionist police force including part-time reservists – the 'B' Specials."

Police exacerbated already heightened tensions, deepening distrust. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was a heavily militarised police force with a central role in securing British interests. Police ranks embodied local divisions, particularly the Specials. A staggering 95 percent of their ranks were Protestants and 100 percent were Unionists (Cowell-Meyers / Gallaher 2020). This confirmed the perception of Catholics/Nationalists: the RUC was a police force composed of, and loyal to, Protestants/Unionists.

By the late 1960s, differential policing led to civil rights protests in Belfast and Derry. They were confronted by armoured trucks, water cannons and police batons. In 1968, the British Army was deployed onto the streets of Northern Ireland, and was initially welcomed by Catholic communities as offering protection against police and paramilitary violence. This soon changed as the British Army killed civil rights protestors in Derry and civilians going about their business in Ballymurphy, Belfast. CS gas was used against protestors for the first time in the UK (Stetler 1970). The British Army paid informants and remained an occupying force for three decades. Ten Republican prisoners on hunger strike in the specially constructed H-Blocks died. Pedestrians entering cities were confronted by army-staffed turnstiles; there were constant road blocks and checks and the border from the North into the Irish Republic was sealed. The British Army's deployment became the longest operation in UK military history (Sanders 2020).

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement brought an end to the civil war. The peace process developed into a power-sharing government elected by proportional representation, accompanied by a reduction in paramilitary organisations and police reform. Civil war had made the police suspect. Two strategies for reform of the police emerged in the wake of hostilities.

The first evolved from what became known as the Patton Report, published in 1998 (Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland 1999). British MP Chris Patton was appointed to head an independent commission on policing in Northern Ireland.

After a period of gathering community evidence, the report recommended limiting police powers and emphasised aesthetic rebranding: the British crown on police badges should be replaced with a harp; the RUC was to be renamed the Police Service of Northern Ireland; and the royal blue uniforms were to be changed to dark green, a colour more synonymous with Ireland. To reformists, the Patton Report appeared revolutionary. In reality, however, it was a liberal democratic reform that did little to challenge the key issues of cross-community recruitment, community-based trust or its historical association with British rule.

Initially, support was uneven for Patton's reforms. Some Protestant groups were aware that it could lead to a loss of control over policing. Nine years after the report's release, Sinn Féin, the major Catholic-Nationalist party, endorsed the new Police Service of Northern Ireland. Yet "no-go" areas for police remain, primarily in Catholic/Nationalist/Republican communities.

A second approach, distinct from reforming the RUC, focused on community-based alternatives to policing. These efforts sought to redefine the role of police and limit their presence, particularly in working-class communities. "The key principle being," according to Scraton, "justice reinvestment to support community-based initiatives, not least the development of community infrastructure that previously did not exist." These initiatives were supported by phased funding from the European Parliament and marked a significant shift in community-based provision.

Community-based alternatives have focused on young people and inter-community harm, and have challenged paramilitary activity. As Scraton explains: "In Nationalist communities there has been a revival of the Irish language, including Irish-medium schools and youth centres alongside community-based initiatives to strengthen provision of services for all ages." Challenging unemployment, marginalisation, poor housing and poverty in working-class communities remains a profound issue, "especially when you realise that although the North has an unrivaled level of matriculation at the top end of school achievement, it also has the highest level of under-achievement. Couple that with a population in which over a third of the population lives on or below the poverty line and you don't have to look further to understand the dynamics of protest within the most marginalised communities."

While it is crucial to identify and understand the conditions that lead to harm and violence, there is clear evidence of community strength in adversity. This extends to non-governmental organisations such as Include Youth and Aiming Higher, which provide counselling services, job training, and mentorship programmes. For Northern Ireland in a time of Covid, its class and sectarian divisions evident, Scraton lists "priorities to challenge social exclusion and marginalisation". First, there are the "dynamics of community-based identity

manifested in religion but underpinned by divided histories, political identities and nationhood". Second, there is the "outworking of coercive control, drugs and criminality particularly, but not exclusively, in working-class Protestant communities".

Finally, "and this is central," states Scraton, there is "the feeling of hopelessness, the reality of joblessness, the alienation of no meaningful future – these realities have real consequences in violence towards others, self-harm and the taking of one's own life". He continues: "It is reality that those participating in recent cross-community violence have more in common than separates them; their communities share the realities of political-economic marginalisation, under-investment and demonisation." The tensions that remain will become more evident as Brexit, voted against in the North, impacts disproportionately on its communities and the campaign to unite Ireland gathers momentum.

GROUP DISCUSSION

> WHAT stood out to you?
And WHY?

> WHICH aspects were surprising or familiar?

> WHERE was PIC abolition explicit?
HOW did it show up?

> WHERE are people moving towards PIC abolition?
HOW else is that lens useful?

> HOW do aspects resonate in your region and country?

> WHAT do you want to learn more about?

> WHAT becomes possible when our struggles
connect across contexts?

NOTES / IDEAS

NOTES / IDEAS

SECTION III

MAKING SENSE OF IT

Although criticism of policing is nothing new, the way these politics are taking shape in the present is original. This section sets out some considerations, advice and alternative models to take into account for those seeking to decrease police violence and uplift community-led solutions. While there are numerous discussions that fall outside the scope of this handbook, the following points are intended as a contribution to continued deliberation and collective action.

CONSIDERATIONS

EXPERIMENT BOLDLY

The previous section highlighted a few experiments pursuing community-led alternatives to policing, but it was far from an exhaustive list. This is because reimagining and practising real safety requires many, many experiments. Experiments of all kinds.

There is a science to PIC abolition work. What are the actual practices that keep those most targeted by police safe? In Manchester, for example, establishing a campaign to get police out of schools was one important step. But if this works in Manchester, does it mean it will work everywhere? Of course not. Similarly, the success in Manchester does not negate the youth-centred work in Northern Ireland, for example. It is a fruitless endeavour to compare experiments, looking for a perfect solution to every problem. In other words, it is far more useful to foster support for experiments than to wait for complete answers.

Equally, there is an art to PIC abolition work. Can we make enough room for experiments to grow, update, change, adapt? Can we encourage these experiments rather than dismissing them because they do not "replace" policing at scale? Experimentation requires the emotional capacity to learn and grow along the way, and the courage to be changed through the process.

COMMUNITY DEFENCE

Are there dangers and pitfalls to community-led solutions? Of course. Everything from the slow challenges of subjective interests changing the direction of the project, to the decisive and uneven, unpredictable impact of vigilante justice or paramilitary reaction. It is not hard to make a list of all the possible reasons community-led solutions could go badly. Indeed, sometimes they do.

At the same time, policing in its current form goes wrong all the time, from fostering racist far-right organisations and racial and ethnic profiling, to the mundane daily practices that maintain an oppressive social order. And yet policing is given a free pass to continue, in large part as is, despite controversy

after controversy. The deadly consequences of this free pass far outweigh the challenges that arise in a community project.

A core part of the work of community defence, or community-based solutions to policing, is transforming the conditions and relationships that create harm. Anger, fear, hate, envy are all human reactions that will not disappear just because there is a group working to increase community safety. Instead, this work is grounded in transformative justice, which both aims to understand the social context of harm and violence, and to find community-led solutions that do not rely on punishment or the state.

INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENTS

Internationalism is the heartbeat that animates PIC abolition. This means that people from different locations find resonance, and sometimes coordination, with others fighting similar struggles in different contexts and conditions (O'Connor 2020). In part, this tendency reflects the global nature of the systems of oppression people are up against. "Community" policing models exported to Europe represent one such example. Even as we focus on Europe here, internationalism asks how we can network with groups outside our contexts, for example in Brazil, Kenya, the Philippines or Mexico.

From surveillance technologies developed by multinational corporations to European states' assistance in US drone strike operations (Amnesty International 2018), violence is replicated and recommissioned, with regularity. In turn, communities resisting the proliferation of state violence in one region necessarily exist in a sort of symbiosis with communities resisting in another.

An internationalist approach to decreasing police violence invites complexity. Rather than simple assessments – for instance, applying resistance models, like a cookie cutter, from one context onto another, or comparing and contrasting contexts, which more often than not shuts down principled debate – an internationalist orientation welcomes both the particular roots of local struggles and the general solidarity that inspires movements to build in tandem. At its core, internationalism is the essential recognition that you and your community are not alone.

DARE TO IMAGINE

Chances are you were part of, or perhaps moved by, the uprisings against police violence during the summer of 2020. Perhaps you felt the force that resonated across continents, when communities mobilised around a *"No!"* to the violence of policing. Part of what made that global moment so powerful was its collective nature. These struggles, so often dismissed as isolated moments, became a powerful declaration of a shared reality. Within that shared outcry of *"No!"* to police violence, a life free from police violence lies nascent. That is the draw. It's worth fighting for.

What is your *reconstructive* vision? Given the perpetual onslaught of police violence, it is understandable that movements often spend more time describing that violence than we do articulating a world free from it – the world we *want*. What would your initiative do with a redirected €1 million, once meant for building that new jail, now invested into community solutions? What would be possible if that imaginative work was made public? PIC abolition is not about having the most correct messaging or models. Rather, it is about a willingness to take community safety so seriously that you dare to imagine that world publicly.

ADVICE

This toolkit is the result of 36 interviews with 24 people. The last question in nearly every conversation focused on advice. Sometimes that question was more personal, such as "What do you wish you knew when you began this work?". Sometimes, it was more general, like "What is the work of the next decade for abolitionist movements in Western Europe?".

Below are a few ruminations from the interviews. As you read, consider what advice you have received and found useful. What have you found to be supportive to stay invested in a project for the long haul?

AVIAH DAY, SISTERS UNCUT

"One important thing is transforming activist spaces into spaces that feel like community, with the kinds of activities that build relationships. So, rather than just a dry meeting with an agenda and getting through the points – that doesn't build community. If we can make space to break bread together, to have reflective time together, to get to know about each other's lives – that is the foundation. That is what SU set out to do initially, we did that really well.

"The next step, which we're working on now, is: having an understanding of people not being disposable. Can our organisational structure do the work of checking on each other? Where the people that come into the space are seen as being worthy of maintaining some level of contact. This is part of building solidarity between people. Inside the space and outside the space – physically, geographically, but also internationally, the practice of linking struggles. We don't have to be best friends, but we do have to have each other's back. We can create structures that mean we have each other's back."

ANNE-CHARLOTTE ARNOULT, LE COMITÉ ADAMA

"I think consultation is important. Decisions shouldn't be taken quickly, but in consultation. It's important to listen to all opinions. And that is also what makes the committee for Adama Traoré a success. The second thing is knowing how to thank the people around you. And you have to remember that alone, you

can go faster, but together you can go farther. The third thing is knowing that you'll be dealing with difficult issues. This is not a world of cuddly teddy bears. The responses you get can be violent. Here, in France, you run into issues that are very complicated: racism, domination, violence and the use of the legal system, the media and the police apparatus to dominate certain people and certain groups. You're tackling something that's not going to be fun. Sincerity helps keep you going in the long term and it helps you reach people. Being visible serves the struggle."

LIZ FEKETE, INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS

"We have to turn cases into issues, issues into causes, causes into campaigns, and campaigns into international movements. So, we have to work not so much on the basis of technical criticisms of the dangers of particular police practices, advocating piecemeal reforms, but within a far more expansive critique of the system as a whole, which is, in turn, informed by the experiences of those most targeted. Essentially, it's working on a model of community self-defence. I think that's the only way to really transform things. The future is community organising for transformative justice."

VANESSA E. THOMPSON, COPWATCH FRANKFURT

"For the upcoming decade in Europe, we have a double task: to push back and to move forward. Pushing back includes not building that prison and lager, as well as pushing back against current police laws. We are living in a time when securitisation and police power is expanding. Even the new police laws in Bavaria are very close to laws during National Socialism. Then, at the same time, we must move forward and create alternatives. It becomes important to practise more abolitionist ways of relating – to rehearse them and concentrate on these kinds of alternatives. We can teach and engage with the tools and knowledge that already exist in the communities, when harm is responded to, not with violence, but with care."

ALTERNATIVES AND EXPERIMENTS

Alternatives to policing come in all shapes and sizes, but at their core, they are efforts to create more just public safety resources. Unlike policing, where force and punishment are increasingly the automatic response, alternatives to policing include everything from decriminalisation, investing in community-based emergency response mechanisms, as well as neighbourhood networks, rapid response and phone trees. This section highlights just three examples of communities creating models and leading processes to address harm in their lives, without centering punishment and policing.

COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY MODELS

Transformative Justice Kollektiv Berlin: www.transformativejustice.eu

Our group has been working on the issues of sexual assault, community accountability and transformative justice since 2011. Inspired by the work of women, queer and trans folks of colour in North America, we want to develop and disseminate concepts and practices for our communities in Germany that can further critical discussion on sexual assault and abuse within intimate relationships. It is our goal to analyse the relationship and various intersections between these forms of abuse and different structures of power and oppression. Therefore, our analysis includes an intersectional critique of state and institutionalised violence.

ALTERNATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND COUNSELLORS

4Front Project, London, UK: 4frontproject.org

"At 4Front, we centre healing and practise transformative justice, whilst directly challenging the UK's addiction to criminalisation, policing and prisons. We are transforming the way in which society understands how to support communities affected by violence and shaping the agenda around how to address the systemic causes of it."

> 4Front works with young people with experiences of violence. They are designing collaborative models for long-term, holistic interventions that work with young people to rebuild their sense of security, protection and trust. They work together with therapists, psychologists, trauma specialists, community members and frontline workers to co-develop interventions that work at the community level. 4Front also trains youth in mental health first aid, emergency first aid, community mobilisation, media interaction, self-care and transformative justice practices.

COMMUNITY-BASED MODEL TO STOP INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

StoP, Hamburg, Germany: stop-partnergewalt.org

StoP is a neighbourhood-based initiative with projects across Germany. They start where domestic violence occurs, at home and in the neighbourhood.

> StoP is a model working with the resources of local communities, promoting community change and collective action. The model is based on the concept of community organising and engages neighbourhoods in relationship building, awareness training and consciousness raising, practical solidarity and interventions to prevent and stop domestic violence. It consists of eight steps, which include different methods of community assessment and action research, identifying key people, starting "kitchen table talks" and forming neighbourhood action groups; introducing the issue of partner violence into district meetings or street fairs; doing outreach work in schools, on markets and in shopping malls. The aim is to build local networks, which include informal neighbours but also institutional actors such as churches, unionists, politicians, local businesses and social institutions. StoP has been successfully implemented in several cities in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Sister projects in Aotearoa, Uganda and the USA are using similar approaches.

SECTION IV

NEXT STEPS

Find one step today.

Take another tomorrow.

It can be as simple as that.

There are moves you can make today that create more options later on. In time, the idea is to move together, with more and more people. It doesn't matter if you are an individual looking for ways to plug in or a seasoned organiser looking to sharpen your campaign strategies.

Begin from where you are.

Commit to finding ways to bring more people with you along the way.

FOR INDIVIDUALS: GETTING PLUGGED IN

FIND AN ORGANISATION

Become a member of an organisation, committee or initiative near you. Join an organisation with campaigns that pressure the institutions upholding racism. Join an organisation that is moving toward the visions of a more just society, conceived by Black, Indigenous and People of Colour liberation movements. If that organisation doesn't exist where you are, start a chapter of an organisation that you're inspired by. Through organisations, we can do the important work of thinking and acting collectively. When we do that, we win.

SKILL UP

We all have something to bring to the table. Have a conversation with a friend about what skills you already have. Ask the organisation you're volunteering at about what kinds of skills are needed. There are so many ways to contribute to collective work. Examples include: running tech for zoom calls, having meaningful conversations with new people, building out fundraising campaigns, social media whizz skills, writing press releases, recovering movement history lessons, sending thank you cards, creating workflow systems, facilitation skills for collective decision-making, making spaces feel welcoming, and so much more.

COLLECTIVE STUDY

People in movement have studied together since people have been in movement together. Create a group to study the history and analysis of the struggles you are inspired by. There are long legacies of grassroots intellectualism, from the founding members of the Black Panther Party who were college students from working-class communities studying liberation theory in the 1960s, to the Sandinistas who began Literacy Brigades in Nicaragua in the 1980s by sending 100,000 volunteers into peasant communities to end illiteracy after the dictator Somoza was overthrown. Gather your friends, family and peers to join this tradition. Looking for a good place to begin? Check out: abolitionistfutures.com/reading-lists.

SPREAD INSPIRATION

Research five organisations that are working to divest from policing. What do you find inspiring? What kind of future are they pointing to? Why is that motivating to you? What aspect of that future do you long to see in your lifetime? Write about that. Dream about that. Make songs. Draw pictures. Craft poetry. Let yourself be moved and organised by the possibilities. Invite your creativity. Invite the creativity of those around you.

FOR GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS: BUILDING A CAMPAIGN THAT CAN WIN

If you are already part of a group or organisation, below you will find steps for creating a public campaign. These steps were crafted by Critical Resistance and emphasise building collective power, shifting conditions, and strengthening coalitions and movements. Go through these steps with your group. Together, assess what else you might need to achieve effective change.

STEP 1: ASSESS YOUR CONDITIONS

- What aspects of policing are most harmful in your community?
- How is your community or city experiencing policing and resisting policing?
- How have allies or movement partner organisations already been organising against policing in your community and what part of policing have they been targeting?
- What alternatives or community-based solutions already exist in your community?
- What other organisations are doing similar or shared work?
- Where are the decision makers on the political spectrum with regards to policing?
- What electoral transitions might be coming up that could impact your organising and how might decision makers shift?

STEP 2:
IDENTIFY A STRATEGIC ISSUE AND GOAL

What is a high-impact issue, aspect or problem of policing happening in your community currently? Using PIC abolition as a strategy is to shrink the systems of imprisonment, policing and surveillance piece by piece. A good issue has **clear political** and **organisational goals**; it speaks to the experiences of people, particularly those **most impacted by the PIC**, and it will **ignite people's hearts and minds**.

Questions to ask when assessing if an issue is high-impact and strategic:

- Does the issue lead to a real difference in people's lives, give people a sense of their own power and change the relations of power?
- Is the issue worthwhile, widely and deeply felt, and consistent with our long-term goal and vision of abolition?
- Is addressing this issue now timely? Will enough people find it important enough to take action? Are you able to develop a clear timeframe with a beginning, middle and end to organise around your issue? Is your group or organisation capable of intervening in that timeframe?
- Does the issue clearly lead to a specific demand? Does the issue have a clear target – a person or group of people that can make your demand(s) happen?
- Is the issue easy to understand and explain? You should be able to explain it in four to five sentences or less.
- Does the issue give your organisation or group opportunities to build leadership, i.e. are there many roles for people to play? Does the issue set up your organisation or group to tackle additional and related issues?

STEP 3:
IDENTIFY PRIMARY TARGETS, SECONDARY TARGETS AND ALLIES

- Who are you targeting? What decision makers or stakeholders have power over your goal or objective? These are your **primary targets**.
- Who else might have power to impact your primary targets? These are your **secondary targets**.
- Who are you **building coalitions** with? Who are your **allies**? Who else might care about this issue?
- What other city decision makers could you **leverage** in organising for your goal?

STEP 4:
DEVELOP A STRATEGY

Once you have an issue to tackle and know who your targets are...

- **How** will you **achieve** this objective? What's the **plan of action** to get your targets to give you what you want? What will you do to achieve your goal?
- How will you **reduce and delegitimise** the social, economic or political power of **policing**?

When choosing strategies, it is important to keep in mind your **goals** and to make sure that the strategies you have identified will work well to further your goals.

Pre-Evaluate the Strength of Your Strategy:

- What power does this strategy show?
- What power does this strategy create?
- What energy does this strategy take?
- What energy does this strategy create?
- What energy do these tactics replenish?

STEP 5:
GENERATE DEMANDS

Goals should be able to be rephrased as demands. Goals and demands should be clear and specific, and should reflect your strategy. Strong campaigns have multiple demands or goals so the group can fight for incremental victories. Incremental victories may put a crack in the system, eliminate a key part of the system of policing or energise your community to boldly resist and strategically challenge policing.

Your campaign should have both long-term and short-term goals. The long-term goals are the ultimate goals of the campaign. This could be a one- or two-year or a multiple-year goal.

We are not going to achieve everything or abolish the PIC tomorrow. What are we seeking to demand and win today, tomorrow and next month, **so that we can continue fighting next year, in the next five years, and so on?**

Short-term goals should be set for the next three to six months. Short-term goals help you measure progress towards your long-term goals and give people hope and a sense of accomplishment. Short-term goals can also be procedural, in that they don't make the change itself but may enable the change you seek.
In framing your demands, also include each part of this **framework for abolitionist strategy** – ***dismantle, change, build***.

- Given your issue and your overall objective, what specifically are you trying to **dismantle** within the institution of policing, in the short term and long term?
- What specifically, in the short and long term, are you trying to **change** in your community's conditions and relationships of power that sustain policing?
- What specifically do you need to **build** in your community to instead sustain collective health, life, equity and community self-determination?

STEP 6:
CREATE A FRAME

Create a frame that excites people and **conveys the layers of your demands and campaign goals**.

- What catchy slogans, calls to action or issues have people in your community or city been excited about recently or in the lead-up to this moment?
- How can you merge what people have been buzzing about lately with making PIC abolition common sense?
- How can you make the abolition of policing irresistible to people and inspire within different communities a sense of their own power and desire for collective liberation?

STEP 7:
CHOOSE AND CALENDAR TACTICS

Brainstorm and choose **what tactics will further your strategies**.

What will your organising group literally do to enact your strategies? What **events**, **mobilisations** and **actions** could help you **reach your target allies** and **sway your primary targets** towards **enacting your demands**?

Pre-Evaluate the Strength of Your Tactics:

- What power do these tactics **show**?
- What power do these tactics **create**?
- What energy do these tactics **take**?
- What energy do these tactics **create**?
- What energy do these tactics **replenish**?

Create a calendar and schedule out your campaign work plan with your goals, strategies, tactics and core tasks for the first six months.

STEP 8:
BUILD A MOVEMENT

A single campaign cannot abolish the entire PIC. In order to fully liberate our communities, we need to build an international movement.

How is your campaign building up other campaigns and efforts for abolition and anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist change?

Additionally, how are you addressing the problems of the PIC and the need for abolition from **multiple sectors**? Who can you connect with and mobilise in each of these different sectors? How are you **spreading abolition** in your campaigns?

Sectors to Consider Building With:

- Health
- Social and service work
- Education
- Labour
- Local businesses
- Faith communities
- Environmental

What other communities or sectors in your local context should you be working with?

WORKSHOP TEMPLATE

BEYOND POLICING

Do you want to continue this conversation with more people in your network or community? One way to do that is to coordinate a workshop. Invite people from your community who want to learn together. Parts of this workshop, created by Critical Resistance, were presented at the International Conference on Penal Abolition (ICOPA). It has been adapted for the purposes of this handbook.

For the full agenda, go to rosalux.eu/handbook-beyond-policing and download the workshop agenda.

Duration: 2 hours, Materials: paper, pens, poem, name tags

WORKSHOP GOALS

- For people to think about why police exist (to maintain status quo, to keep poor people of colour and poor people in check); to have some historical understanding of policing
- For people to start thinking about a world without police
- Clear examples of what resistance to policing looks like in general and in your local region
- To start thinking of ways they can refrain from calling the cops, or using alternative resources/strategies
- Have ideas about where to plug in to local resistance

GROUP DISCUSSION

> Welcome (20 min)

> Visioning Practice (20 min)

> Definitions of Policing (10 min)

> Timeline of Policing (25 min)

> Scenarios and Community Solutions (30 min)

> Closing (15 min)

RESOURCES

REPORTS AND TOOLKITS

Amnesty International (2018). Trapped in the Matrix. Secrecy, stigma, and bias in the Met's Gangs Database. Available at: https:// policehumanrightsresources.org/trapped-in-the-matrix-secrecy-stigma-and-bias-in-the-mets-gangs-database

Cradle Community (2021). Brick by Brick How We Build a World Without Prisons. Available at: www.hajarpress.com/books/brick-by-brick

INCITE! (2018). Law Enforcement Violence Toolkit. Available at: https://incite-national.org/stop-law-enforcement-violence

Kids of Colour / Northern Police Monitoring Project (2020). Decriminalise the Classroom. Available at: https:// nopoliceinschools.co.uk/resources

Project Nia (2013). Building Accountable Communities Toolki. Available at: https:// project-nia.org/building-accountable-communities-toolkit

The Monitoring Group (2018). The War on Gangs or a Racialised War on Working Class Black Youths by Stafford Scott. Available at: https://tmg-uk.org/ publications/blog-post-title-one-8zph4

The Transnational Institute (2021). Abolish National Security by Arun Kundnani. Available at: www.tni.org/en/publication/abolish-national-security

MODELS

Restorative Justice Model: www.re-vivre.be (in French)

Transformative Justice Model: www.whatreallymakesussafe.com/en (in English)

Das Risiko wagen: www.transformativejustice.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Das-Risiko-wagen.pdf (in German)

Defund Police Resources: https://defundpolice.org (in English)

ORGANISATIONS

Kids of Colour: kidsofcolour.com

Sisters Uncut: sistersuncut.org

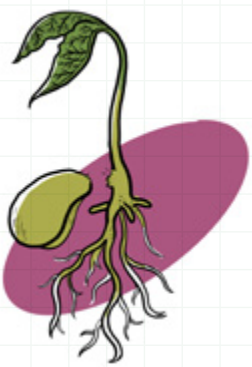
Abolish Frontex: abolishfrontex.org

Abolitionist Futures: abolitionistfutures.com

Empty Cages Collective: prisonabolition.org

SOS Racismo: www.sosracismo.pt

Kampagne für Opfer rassistischer Polizeigewalt (KOP): kop-berlin.de



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NOTES / IDEAS

NOTES / IDEAS

SISTERS IN MOTION

PART TWO

In May 2017, Sisters Uncut successfully took over the visitors' centre adjacent to Her Majesty's Prison Holloway. In reality, climbing through the window was just the beginning. Two hundred people, organised weeks before, arrived on the scene cheering at the plumes of purple and green smoke that signalled who was inside and what was under way.

The supporters became a crucial part of the action.

They arrived en masse, just in time to become a soft barricade between the Sisters, who were still securing the doors, and the police arriving on scene. Firefighters had also arrived, but only long enough to toss a few smoke detectors through the windows and wish the protestors well. After 10 hours, the police finally left. The Sisters on the roof came down and everyone was mostly unsure of what to do next. "It was unbelievable," recounted one Sister. "We never thought anyone would allow what we just did to happen. We realised that when you get enough people together, you can actually do it."

A sort of community festival kicked off.

Sisters Uncut created the public space they longed for: a community-led women's building free from the criminal punishment system. They had to figure it out as they went, but they intentionally organised everything around a simple principle: meeting people's needs. They cooked food together. People offered yoga classes and child care. Prayer rooms and manicure stations were set up. Decorating the centre became important. Green and purple and all things that sparkled brought the room to life. Arts and crafts stations were available. Hand-knitted "Care Not Cages" chair cushions were made. Painting, stencils and knitting made the space beautiful and welcoming.

The reclamation had caused a commotion, but it also piqued the interest of people in neighbouring boroughs. Mums and young people came for art, music and snacks. At one point, a 14-year-old young woman visited the welcome table. One of the Sisters asked her the simple question "What's going on in your life?". The young Black woman recounted a number of horrible experiences with the police and sexual violence. She shared this without knowing the purpose of the festival. "That would have been massive," one Sister recalled, "if I were to have wandered into a space like that when I was a teenager."

Most days, the festival offered collective education programmes. One day saw workshops by movement partners like Take Back the City, covering the sale of Holloway Prison and its connection to local and national gentrification struggles.

Another day, people offered Know Your Rights training to fortify communities facing police harassment and immigration raids, followed by an abolition workshop by the Empty Cages Collective. Sisters themselves gave a workshop on the ins and outs of accessing domestic violence services, sharing their personal experiences.

Here, something important became clear. The walls were materially unchanged, yet the quality of life existing between them was transforming. A room that once monitored the interactions between loved ones was now a space shaped by people living a different set of values. As one Sister described it, the festival had "the potential to bring a number of different things together in terms of visioning abolitionist projects". She clarified: "It's not something we see as just closing down prisons, but is also about shifting resources to the things that we know help people and prevent people from both committing harm and being harmed."

The festival lasted for five days. During that time, Theresa May announced the next steps in moving forward on the Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill. Sisters now had the ear of the nation and responded from inside Holloway. They published an article in the Guardian detailing how "May has failed domestic violence survivors" while highlighting the locally-driven demand to put funding toward "a women's building on this site" (Archer 2017).

It had an impact.

In 2019, Mayor of London Sadiq Khan granted a £42 million loan to the Peabody housing association. This effectively kept the land out of private hands and ensured some percentage of affordable housing. Another win came when the local council in Islington drew up the guidelines for use of the space, which included a requirement for a women's building as part of whatever was rebuilt on the land (Gelder 2019). Unquestionably, the Sisters' reclamation and immeasurable efforts in community organising shifted the conditions of the fight.

Since then, a new fight has emerged. Sisters, alongside other groups like Reclaim Holloway, continue to pressure Peabody on living up to the council's guidelines. Similarly, council members require community pressure to enforce those guidelines. Still, a bigger challenge lies ahead: the Mayor used public money for that loan. He also controls MOPAC, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime. A critical question remains to be answered: will the upcoming women's building be run by the community and free from the tentacles of the criminal legal system?

While the fight continues, Sisters are clear in their strategy of blocking the bad and building the good. One Sister described this simultaneous approach: "When the criminal legal system gets defunded and disinvested from, what we want and are trying to build up ourselves are communities that are well-equipped, have the resources, and are skilled in responding to violence without relying on the state."

This dual strategy took time to develop. "That was a whole process, to understand the impulse to tidy people away and to punish people – in society and in our organisation." They deliberated and struggled together. This level of investment meant that many of them were changed in the process. This led them to the practice of transformative justice, as well as creating ways to respond to interpersonal harm without calling the police. "We want to treat each other with love and support. We do not want to go straight into excluding people. We want to move through that, and actually transform the situation," explained one Sister. The goal is to create fewer points of contact between the police and the communities most targeted by police violence. "This process helped a lot of people within Sisters to imagine what that could look like, wider than just Sisters."

Sisters Uncut began with one important question: what really makes survivors of domestic and sexual violence safe? Their answer to that question changed over time – from calls for funding services to calls for investing in community-based alternatives. In 2016, they formally declared themselves an abolitionist organisation. This shift happened before the #MeToo movement; before the 2020 freedom summer of global uprisings against the racist violence of policing.

Sisters became an abolitionist organisation because their lived experiences laid bare the inextricable links between interpersonal harm and the mechanisms of state violence. In so doing, they became part of an international movement that rejects the assumption that "bad" people are policed or sent to prison. Rather, their work underscores the ways that policing and prisons lock people away instead of addressing social problems at their root.

The reclamation of Holloway was a short-term, imperfect experiment. Differences among organisers caused challenges and the festival's intensity took a real toll. Sometimes Sisters found good solutions to the obstacles that emerged during their nightly debrief meetings. Sometimes they didn't. One thing was certain: the experiment revealed a steep learning curve about the kinds of skills needed to create the space they long for. Rather, the lesson here is found in the spirit of collective experimentation. And their action prefigured that process, providing a brief glimpse of what was possible. At the end of the day, the question remains: what could the Sisters and their partners have pulled off had they had even a fraction of the resources being negotiated by property developers? What is needed to build out the Sisters' abolitionist vision at scale?

EPILOGUE

ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

My phone buzzed. Turning it over, I found a short SMS staring back at me: *"It's out."* It referred to a report that would matter a great deal for *Beyond Policing*. Immediately, I began searching. Nerves on end, stomach turning.

I could guess what I'd find. So many of my friends had worked on the People's Tribunal against the NSU Complex (Moore / Fray 2018). Here, I had joined communities from across Germany gathering to answer a difficult question: how was it that organised Nazis could bomb migrant communities and get away with it – for *seven* years? That question seemed to puzzle large parts of German society, but perhaps this report would shed some light on things.

The official numbers were in. Since 2017, around 377 cases of far-right "extremist" activity – posing "significant danger for the state and for society" – have been reported inside German police departments (Moore 2021). Such a trend could certainly impact police investigations. There are likely even more cases, unreported. Still, according to the report, that number grows to a staggering 1,400 cases when the military and secret services are included.

Another piece to the puzzle. A parallel to the broader narrative, but nonetheless, illustrative of what the Tribunal meetings uncovered: structural obstacles during the trial and innate flaws in police investigations had been the proverbial smoke where people ultimately found fire. By the end, many had come to the conclusion that the very structures that claim to protect people are in fact fostering the conditions that harm, cause violence, and even result in the premature deaths of marginalised people.

This is how *Beyond Policing* began, amidst the interplay between structural violence and efforts towards community safety. The global anti-racist protests during the summer of 2020 only underscored the problem at hand: some portions of society experience the protection of policing, while others experience it as targeted violence. This project is drawn to the space between and beyond. What began as an effort to unpack the movement demand of "defund the police" became a means to foreground the many ways people are already creating safer conditions, on their own terms, without relying on the police. It is those projects – where people organise to make our most vulnerable communities truly safe – that give shape to a vision in which the pain, trauma and suffering that many people face could be alleviated, and even healed.

I began this project by asking where people are demanding divestment from policing and calling for community-based alternatives. This brought me into contact with organisers and academics who were public in their commitment to PIC abolition. Some wrote about its history, while others were launching campaigns, or hinted at that direction. It was in those encounters that I learned the last decade of austerity measures had already set the stage for this iteration of abolition work. From there, I talked with people who would never use the term "defund" but, prompted by issues such as poor and rural infrastructure or harsh political conditions, invested in community-based approaches to resolving harm and meeting people's basic needs. From them, I learned that the terminology itself matters little. More significant was the practice of creating a cohesive sense of community, and the ability to provide for, or even at times defend, the collective that encourages an orientation towards alternatives. With the support of mentors, the project shifted from "where are people practising defund?" to "how do people relate to the core components of divestment in their current work?". By the end of the project, I had talked with 26 people from across Western Europe, sometimes more than once, in a total of 34 interviews.

As I write the final pages, I get another text. *"Did you see what's happening in the UK?"* Thousands of people had gathered to honour the life of Sarah Everard, a white woman abducted and killed in the south-east of England. In the UK, women are killed by men, on average, every three days.[22] For most women of colour, their cases seldom, if ever, make national headlines. The man who killed Sarah was a police officer. His previous offences went unchecked. Those who tend to claim that more police make women safer were bewildered. That cognitive dissonance spiked as mourners gathering at vigils were handcuffed with force and dragged into police vans. Outrage has since spilled over into massive protests against a hastened bill that would give police *more* power to control protests (Fekete 2021).

Since *Beyond Policing* began, there has been a significant shift in public responses to police violence in Western Europe. Calls for more policing and "better" policing no longer figure as the *only* viable solution. A trend towards community services, alternatives to policing, and eroding police power have entered the conversation. Not without scrutiny, but as a nonetheless credible response.

22 For more information, visit www.femicidecensus.org (Accessed: 1 March 2021).

This project began and ended at peak moments of police violence. A critical mass seems to be forming and gaining traction, of those articulating the systemic violence of policing and the necessity of social solutions to social problems. After numerous conversations, debates and deliberations, I am moved most by those who have stopped taking the bait when it comes to community safety. Rather than fighting each other over scraps of protections – the lie that some people deserve security while others don't – they have changed the discursive boundaries altogether. It is when people come together, constructing a creative constellation of alternatives and allowing that process to transform them along the way, that policing and punishment become obsolete.

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NOT JUST AN AMERICAN CRISIS

Police violence is not a new phenomenon. Protest in reaction to that violence is, similarly, nothing new. The 2020 uprisings, when millions around the world rose up against the violence of policing, were only the most recent manifestation of resistance. Unsurprisingly, responses to the police killing of George Floyd varied: as mainstream media selectively foregrounded "friendlier" versions of policing in Europe, some activists tore at the roots of institutional racism in the European Union. Still, criticisms alone do not decrease police violence.

In Europe today, more people than ever are asking: what *actually* makes communities safe? *Beyond Policing* offers a brief glimpse into some of the groups actively attempting to answer that question by exploring the demand from social movements to "defund the police". At its heart, this demand is not merely about divesting from policing, but also investing in community-led solutions that empower people to take care of themselves and each other. Unpacking the vision and components of the demand, this handbook offers practicable ways of being together that address safety in people's day-to-day lives.

Through stories, frameworks and templates for discussion, the handbook aims to reach a broad audience, from the newly-committed novice moved to action during the summer of 2020 and eager to take the next steps, to the seasoned organiser looking for inspiration abroad. *Beyond Policing* is for all those who understand that, fundamentally, creating meaningful safety is integral to a good life and a just society.