

CRITICAL RESISTANCE



June 14, 2017

Dear,

Critical Resistance works with others to build an international movement to end the prison industrial complex by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us safe. We believe that basic necessities such as food, shelter, and freedom are what really make our communities secure. As such, our work is part of global struggles against inequality and powerlessness. We do our work by organizing concrete campaigns - such as stopping jail expansion or curbing the power or funding of police - and through educational or media efforts. In this work we try to break down the walls built between imprisoned and free world organizing.

Critical Resistance is taking up some work this year to highlight the use of state repression as related to the prison industrial complex. In so doing, we think that it's important to hear from political prisoners as to how you understand political imprisonment being used to repress social movements for liberation. As we carry our work forward, your ongoing work and struggle for national liberation, against imperialism, and to organize your community is an inspiration to so many in our organization and movement.

We would love to hear your thoughts on topics of state repression, including if you like, the personal impact to you and how we could work to support political prisoners as we work to abolish the prison industrial complex.

We are soliciting responses from political prisoners that can also be shared at the International Conference on Penal Abolition to be held this year July 26-29, 2017, New Bedford, MA, Turtle Island. [INCLUDE INFO ABOUT ICOPA]. We plan to exhibit any materials (or portions of them) that you would like to provide to us. We will need to receive them by mid-July to include there. However, if we don't receive responses in time for ICOPA, due to the short deadline, that is fine and we still would love to hear from you. We intend to post responses in complete or abridged form on our website and may include them in our printed newspaper, The Abolitionist, which is sent to 5500 prisoners across the US.

You are invited to send any analysis, experience, or thoughts in this topic, or respond to the guiding questions below. Responses (or drawings) that are 3 pages or less will be easiest for us to publish.

Guiding questions:

- What tactics have you seen employed by the state to repress social movements and how have these changed over time?
- Are there ways that you anticipate state repression changing in the current era, either related to the Trump presidency, the rise of austerity politics and fascism globally, or due to other factors?
- Do you think there will be an increase in the use of imprisonment and policing in state repression and/or more insidious forms of movement repression such as surveillance and infiltration?

- What connections or differences do you see in the use of imprisonment as a tool for wide scale/mass social control and the use of targeted political imprisonment?
- How do you think national liberation or anti-imperialist movements specifically are targeted by political imprisonment?
- What do you suggest we do on the outside to defend our communities against state repression?

Additionally, we are working on defining state repression and have come up with this definition, adapted from Robert J. Goldstein 1978 (staterepression.com). Do you have thoughts on the below definition?

State repression involves the actual or threatened use of physical, emotional violence against an individual, a community or organization for the purpose of imposing a harmful impact and eliminating social and political dissent, as well as deterring specific activities and/or beliefs perceived to be challenging to government power, interests (including economic interests and partnerships), practices or institutions. Historically, the targets of repression have been political, social, or religious bodies, people of color, poor people, queer people, immigrants, youth, and other oppressed communities that make demands for self-determination and reorganization of power in the US. State repression intends to expose, disorganize, disrupt, or neutralize political actors and communities.

Like other forms of coercion, state repression relies on threats, intimidation, and actual violence to pressure people to change their course of action and/or reduce capacity and confidence to continue the intended (or potential) course of action. State repression can be both legal or extra-legal depending on the visibility, rights, and status of the targeted actor or community. However, because of the ways that the prison industrial complex has legislated, developed and augmented policing, imprisonment, surveillance, the court system and fines and fees to fracture, disempower and make vulnerable many communities that have historically made demands for re-organization of state power, many of the applications of state repression are legal under the prison industrial complex. Therefore, the prison industrial complex and its components are core instruments that the State uses to repress movements.

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