

justice4bolton

PRESS RELEASE -for immediate release

Thursday July 8th 2010

Open invitation for all anti-fascists to defend the right to protest Campaign launches in Bolton

The Bolton launch of the national justice4bolton campaign will be held at Quebec Hall, Quebec Street, Bolton, tomorrow night (Friday July 9th) at 7.30pm.

The aim of the campaign, which was launched nationally at the House of Commons last month, is to stop the use of conspiracy laws to delegitimise protests against the rise of fascism and the right to any public protest. The Bolton launch emphasises j4b's support and solidarity for all the anti fascist demonstrators, both local and from other parts of the country, including those stopped and searched, injured, arrested, fined and charged during a rally against the English Defence League in Bolton on March 20th this year.

In a message to the Bolton launch Shadow Cabinet Minister Peter Hain, national president of justice4bolton, said: "Friday's meeting is our next step on the road to justice for Bolton people and all the anti-fascists and trade unionists who showed such great solidarity against the racist EDL on 20th March.

"justice4bolton's determination to expose and stop this attempt to criminalise protests and protestors is absolute. On behalf of the national committee, I wish you a productive meeting. Our unity will defend the right to protest against and, ultimately, stop the fascists."

Supporters of the justice4bolton campaign include trade unionists, anti fascist organisations, and members of the local communities in Bolton. Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn, who spoke at the national campaign launch, is also a supporter of justice4bolton.

In a message to the national launch, Yasmin Qureshi, who was elected to the Bolton South East parliamentary seat in May, said: "I supported the aims of the protest against the English Defence League in Bolton on 20th March and I was at the demonstration. I did not see or hear any activity amongst the protestors that I would have described as 'violent disorder', though there were some police officers who, in my view, were being heavy-handed in some cases."

Other speakers at tomorrow night's meeting in Bolton include human rights lawyer Robert Lizar on the legality of the right to protest, Martin Challender, secretary of Bolton Trades Council, Dr Rhetta Moran, of justice4bolton's national committee, and Independent Muslim Forum representatives. Messages of support have already been received from Labour and Green councillors.

Local councillors, trade unionists, anti fascists, members of faith communities and other Bolton people concerned about what happened on 20th March will be at the meeting.

Background Note to Newsdesks: Unite Against Fascism called the demonstration on March 20th to protest against the EDL's rally in the centre of Bolton. The EDL is a racist and fascist organisation which has links to the BNP and is violently Islamophobic.

The peaceful anti fascist protest against the EDL was severely disrupted by police. There were many injuries to demonstrators and around 70 arrests.

Greater Manchester Police's own incident report shows that only two police officers were injured. One received a broken finger in an incident and the other was bitten by a police dog.

A number of anti fascist protestors (including Muslims) were arrested and some have been charged. Some protestors face potential charges of conspiracy. Those facing charges include Weyman Bennett, joint secretary of UAF, and Rhetta Moran, joint secretary of Greater Manchester UAF.

Justice4Bolton believes this attempt to use conspiracy laws indicates a move towards de-legitimatising protests against the rise of fascism in the UK. These laws require less proof than charges for specific incidents and the treatment of anti fascists in Bolton is a serious threat to everyone who values the right to public protest. If they are found guilty, the anti fascist activists face lengthy prison sentences.

Justice4Bolton is demanding that all charges against anti fascist protestors in Bolton are dropped - and we urge everyone who opposes the activities of fascist organisations like the EDL to back this demand and to support our campaign.

People who wish to contribute to the Justice4Bolton Campaign can make payments to AFDC (Anti-Fascist Defence Campaign), Lloyds TSB Bank, Sort Code: 30-94-74, Account Number: 16666368. Cheques should be made payable to AFDC. You can contact the campaign at AFDC, PO Box 56959, London N10 9AZ.

For more information contact:
Kath Grant, Press Officer, justice4bolton:
Mobile no: 07812471047

email: info@justice4bolton.org

www.justice4bolton.org