

Parents for Real Justice

Speaking Out For The Rights of Our Children

www.parentsforrealjustice.org.uk

Email: info@parentsforrealjustice.org.uk



Background Briefing: Parents for Real Justice

Parents shocked by the vindictive and dishonest vendetta carried out by the authorities against students caught up in last year's student demos are this week launching Parents for Real Justice.

The group's aim is to provide support in whatever way it is needed – legal, emotional, political - for students whose cases are likely to be before the courts over the coming months.

History

Parents For Real Justice is a rapidly growing group of parents, family and friends of people who got caught up in the student demonstrations of 2010 and 2011. Supporters include Susan Matthews, mother of Alfie Meadow, Polly Samson, Charlie Gilmour's mother and his father David Gilmour.

In addition, the campaign has now received pledges of support from over 30 student Unions, including major Student Unions such as Manchester University and ULU (University of London Union). More are coming on board daily.

The campaign was set up by Jennifer Hilliard, a mother who has never been an activist or campaigner nor been involved in or attended a demonstration. However as she watched a family member go through the process of being arrested and charged she also became aware of and incensed by how the legal process is abusing our youth.

Announcing the launch of Parents for Real Justice, Mrs Hilliard said: "We are deeply concerned by what is happening to our children and other students and people who attended a demonstration simply to exercise their right to demonstrate and their need to be heard.

"We saw the students speaking out for what they believed in and wanting to be heard and we feel that we now, as parents, family and friends have to stand firmly behind them and make sure that the events of those demonstrations cannot be used to put students behind bars and to intimidate future demonstrators.

"Many of us have witnessed first-hand events and actions by the police, CPS and the legal system that have left us not only disappointed but also shocked and appalled.

"Many of those arrested are facing disproportionate charges of Violent Disorder when only a few years ago they would have been charged with Affray. The escalation of charges within the Public Order Act of 1986 and the way it is being applied is alarming in the extreme. These young people who, in the main, have never been in trouble before are now facing lengthy prison sentences in category 2 prisons amongst hardened criminals.

We are campaigning to publicise what is happening to these students. To raise awareness of the political motivations behind the charges they are facing – often charges that are

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excessively punitive - which as we have seen, are resulting in lengthy custodial sentences for relatively minor offences. We are campaigning to change public and political opinion that has been swayed by the distorted representation of events in the media and by police accounts.

Why now

Last year's student demonstrations have in many respects been overtaken in the public awareness by the more recent civil unrest on the streets of London, Birmingham and Manchester. Swift action by the courts, in the case of the latter, means that while many of those cases have been heard and sentenced already, the cases of many individuals who were caught up in last year's student demonstrations are only now beginning to come before the courts.

In the coming months there will be many more trials and potentially many more students receiving custodial sentences so it is important to act now to raise the public profile and make this about what is wrong with the system (and was wrong with the policing) not what the students did or did not do wrong.

Further Information

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