

How to Set Up An Anti-Raids Group

JCDecaux

RACIST
VANS
GO HOME!



ANTI-RAIDS NETWORK
NETWORK23-ORG/ANTIRAIDS

Haringey Anti-Raids

About this zine...

Since September 2016, Haringey Antiraids has been organising to challenge immigration raids in our area, as one small step towards a world without borders and prisons, where no one is illegal.

Through weekly street stalls in Seven Sisters, we have built a visible and trusted presence in the area and developed strong links of mutual support with many local migrant groups. We believe not only that this work could be easily replicated across the country, but that it is desperately needed. This is why we have created this zine, to share the lessons we have learned through 18 months of local organising in the hope of seeding similar groups elsewhere.

Of course, an organised local group such as ours is just one part of a much wider fabric of resistance to immigration raids, which takes many different forms. A representative from the Immigration Services Union acknowledged in 2015 that 'immigration enforcement jobs are disrupted to a greater or lesser extent pretty much every week'. However we do believe that local groups play an important role in building cultures of solidarity, sharing practical advice on resisting raids and providing a visible anti-racist and pro-migrant presence on the streets.

We hope this zine provides a useful insight into our group's principles and tactics, and aids others to begin organising against raids in their local area.

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How to Set Up An Anti-Raids Group

What's happening locally

One of the first steps is to find out what immigration enforcement is happening in your area. It's important to get a picture where raids are happening, and who is being targeted. Some strategies we've found useful are talking to shopkeepers, placing FOI requests, monitoring online reports of immigration raids (e.g. @AntiRaids on twitter).

Building a group

First thing you need for an anti-raids group is people to organise with. One option is to put out an open call-out and organise a public meeting. In Haringey Anti-Raids case, this took the form of an open "Raids Resistance Training" – something that was also used to gauge interest in a local anti-raids group. Most established anti-raids groups will help you facilitate a training event.

Another strategy is to organise (initially, at least) via a pre-existing affinity group (e.g. a group of your friends or neighbours or an existing political or social group). This certainly short-cuts some of the initial challenges of forming a group, but can make it harder to grow beyond your initial core.

What do you want to do

Strategies for resisting raids vary dramatically depending on groups. Some groups focus on physically resisting immigration raids, others on spreading information to ensure that people targeted by immigration raids are able to assert their legal rights. Diversity of tactics is good and no-one should feel that wanting to take a less (or more) militant approach makes them wrong.

The key things to consider when discussing approaches are capacities of members of the group as well as the sustainability of any action. If your group stops one raid through direct action and then has to suspend all other activity to spend the next year doing legal support, that might not necessarily be the most effective approach. Sometimes small-scale, replicable, sustainable activity can be more effective than dramatic direct action.

Setting Up A Street Stall

Setting up a street stall is useful to build awareness of immigration raids, to provide information about legal rights and to link up with people who may be willing to help challenge them.

There are a number of resources that we have found very useful in disseminating

information and helping people who are the targets of raids. We've taken many of these resources directly from the wider Anti Raids Network, while others we've made or bought ourselves.

- A **trestle table**. Without a table it's difficult to run a stall.
- **Rights cards**. These cards have information on them about how to resist raids, what your rights are when you're being stopped by immigration enforcement, and how to avoid engaging with them.
- **Leaflets about local raids**. These leaflets explain the links between immigration enforcement, police, and gentrification in the local area, and are a good way of starting up a conversation.
- **NO CONSENT notices**. These are signs that shopkeepers can put in their shop, withdrawing consent for immigration officers or police to enter the shop without a warrant.
- **Information for other services**. People will regularly come to your stall with problems that you cannot directly help them with, but will want to support. It could be anything from the need for an immigration lawyer or advice on their immigration status, to an issue with housing or the police. Perhaps even consider doing a joint stall with another group. We've found our regular stalls with Food Not Bombs North London have helped us to speak to people who would otherwise perhaps have been reluctant to stop.



Problems you might encounter

- **Distrust.** Remember: they don't know you from Adam. They live in a country where immigration is endlessly under attack in the media. Why should they trust you? The best thing you can do when you encounter this problem is to be honest about your agenda, and keep at it. It may be that for the first few months you will encounter general distrust, but the longer you work at it, the more likely it is that they will begin to see you're not just a chancer or a cop, but are there for the long-run, are interested in fighting the same things as them, and can be of help.
- **Hassle.** Occasionally you'll get hassle from over-zealous council officials or even police. One thing worth noting is that you are not selling anything, merely giving out political materials which is theoretically protected under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the right to freedom of expression) so just be confident and don't let them distract you from why you are there.
- **Disagreement.** This is not a problem - it's important to have proper discussions with people about borders, xenophobia, capitalism and so on. But be prepared for this - it might be worth thinking about common arguments you hear about borders ('limits', the need to abide by the law etc.) and consider discussing these common arguments within your group first, to be better prepared to discuss these issues when you're on the street.
- **Pessimists.** Beware of suggesting that the law is some magical formula that will protect us if only we know it well enough. People are well aware that knowing the law on its own will be no help. It's important to emphasise the necessity of direct action, solidarity and community resistance. Point to examples of successes of these.
- **Cancellations.** An online spreadsheet, simple email 'cc' list, messaging app or simply exchanging numbers with people from your group are good communication tools to ensure a couple of people are down to cover the stall each week and that you can cancel at the last minute in the event of bad weather.
- **Complaints.** Some people will be very happy to moan at you about 'illegals' coming over here, taking our jobs, our benefits etc. The first thing to remember here is that many people in the UK are undocumented, which doesn't mean they are not entitled to documentation. The line between legal/illegal is a blur. Another argument to put forth is that the government is moving the goal post continuously so one day you might be legal and the next you are not anymore. Solidarity and resistance are the only way to counter that. Finally, for all the "good citizens" out there, the government breaks its own law all the time. Charities working with migrants have to constantly appeal unlawful decisions, taken by local authorities, the Home Office, etc.

Workshops

Another thing you can do is offer workshops on raids for local community groups. It is worth taking a bit of time to find out what migrant community groups exist in your area. From our experience, the most fruitful and long-lived links were with self-organised migrant groups with strong political consciousness, Nevertheless, there may be other groups and NGOs with members or users who are interested or could benefit from a meeting or skillshare. Local groups could include community centres, migrant centres, churches, mosques, temples or anything that has a built in group of users who might be impacted by raids.

The best workshops tend to be those that begin with more of a meeting and sharing of experiences and emotions arising from raids, that then evolve into a short explanation of key principles about the law and people's rights (and we mean short - there is only so much people can retain about the law, especially in a crowded room of 40 people while working through an interpreter), and most importantly, role play. Role play is critical to allow people a forum to practice both their English and their confidence.

Workshops take a bit of thought, as we have to teach ourselves about it first, and also need to make sure there is an interpreter where necessary. But it can be a good way of building links, and spreading knowledge about people's rights and opportunities to resist raids.

This has been made even easier since the creation of a publicly-accessible slideshow complete with notes: <http://slides.com/antiraiders/deck>. The important thing to note is that the law is not very developed in this field and there are a lot of grey areas. Some people may be looking for easy answers about the law, but there aren't many. Another thing to emphasise is that it is not enough just to know the law, as immigration officers frequently abuse their powers. The only way we can reduce the prevalence of raids is to come out in force and show solidarity with people when they are being harassed by immigration officers.

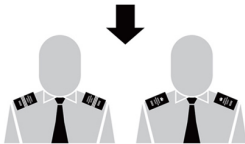
Opposing raids when they happen

Opposition to raids can take a number of different forms dependant on lots of variables, including the kind of raid happening and the number and capacities of people willing to oppose. There is no pre-set formula for how to resist a raid, or for the outcome that resistance will produce. It is therefore important to use discretion and forethought when opposing raids, weighing up the consequences that your actions are likely to produce. Here are a few potential actions you could think about taking:

- **Give information to the person being questioned.** Most people do not know or understand their rights when confronted with an Immigration Enforcement officer. Officers generally have very few powers to question or detain, and so letting the person being interrupted this information (usefully explained on the Anti-Raids rights cards) can potentially make a massive difference - giving them the confidence to refuse to answer questions or simply walk away.
- **Film the Immigration Enforcement Officers.** Filming officers puts extra pressure on them to do their jobs according to the law, and not overstep their powers. It also means you have a useful record of what happened in case the legality of the raid is challenged at a later stage. When doing this it is best to explain to the person being interrupted that you are not going to film them, and that you are on their side.
- **Encourage other people to intervene as well.** The more people willing to stand up to the Immigration Enforcement officers, the harder it will be for them to do what they set out to do, and the fewer people are likely to be detained or deported. The knock-on effect is also important: if a raid that was expected to take half an hour takes two hours, then that means fewer hours in the day to harass immigrants for the officers you're holding up: that's a success.
- **After the raid.** Often the best time to go and talk to local residents, shoppers, and shopkeepers. Inform them that a raid has happened (if they didn't know already), give them the information cards on their rights during an immigration stop, and encourage them to use an emergency raid alert system, if have one.



HOW TO SPOT AN I



HOW DO THEY ARRIVE?

Vans marked IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT
Sometimes unmarked white/blue/black
vans accompanied by police car.

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

Should be wearing ICE
insignia/numbers on shoulders.
They often hide them.

WHERE DO THEY GO?

Streets, Train & Tube stations,
Buses, Workplaces, Homes.

HOW DO THEY ACT?

Arrive in groups, sometimes
with plain clothes officers.
Often block entrances/exits.

IMMIGRATION RAID

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you see someone being stopped by ICE officers or police on immigration grounds, and your immigration status does not put you at risk, we recommend you:

- 1** Immediately make the person aware they do not have to answer questions & they can leave
- 2** Remind the officers of the law
- 3** Film the incident, where possible asking the person stopped if that's ok, or just film the officers involved. This may be useful in making a claim in the event of an unlawful stop or arrest.
- 4** Record lapel numbers of officers involved
- 5** Make other members of the public aware of what's happening
- 6** Get witnesses' contact details if the stop leads to an arrest or the person wants to pursue it afterwards.
- 7** Attempt to pass on a phone number to the individual if you think the stop will lead to arrest
- 8** Do not get aggressive or physically obstruct officers if you want to avoid arrest for obstruction.
- *** If you want to refer to their guidance when speaking to Immigration Officers, everything can be found in Chapter 31 UKBA Operational Enforcement Manual: tinyurl.com/7b7s9yn

What is the Anti-Raids Network

Every day people are resisting immigration raids in their homes, workplaces and neighbourhoods. The aim of the Anti Raids Network (ARN) is solely to gather and spread information which could be used to oppose raids. Information includes alerts about raids, practical and legal resources, and stories and examples of resistance.

This is not the only initiative

ARN does not claim to organise or speak on behalf of those involved in this struggle against raids. Indeed, most of the people resisting raids will never have heard of ARN. ARN welcomes the creation of new initiatives against raids.

Diversity of tactics

People fight raids in many different ways. To give just a few examples: giving out legal information in different languages; running info-stalls to talk about raids in our neighbourhoods; gathering neighbours to challenge raid squads; helping people at risk to get away; physically stopping arrest vans; resisting inside detention centres, and supporting their struggles; organising in workplaces ... and much more. ARN stands in solidarity with all those resisting raids, whatever ways they choose to fight. While individuals and groups may have their own different views about what tactics work best, ARN will not put out statements condemning any actions against raids.

Do it yourself

The network strongly supports resistance based on “doing it yourself”. That is, we all are most powerful when we join together in our streets, workplaces, and neighbourhoods, build up solidarity, and take action for ourselves. We do not work with political parties.

Decentralised self-organisation

Individuals or groups involved in ARN can act for themselves without seeking permission or consensus from the whole network. We ask only that those using the ARN name (1) support this and the earlier basic statement of principles (below), and (2) don't claim to represent the whole network. Within that framework, any one is free to set up their own “Anti Raids” initiative: diversity of views, ideas, materials, etc. is encouraged!

There are a few network-wide resources, for example: the central Anti Raids blog

(<http://antiraid.net>); email; and twitter accounts. The main purpose of these is to act as a general contact point and to spread basic information and alerts about raids. They can also act as platforms to publish ideas and opinions coming from individuals and groups within the network. They are not there to promote one “central” or “consensus” Anti Raids position, and may reflect a diversity of positions (again, so long as they hold to the shared basic principles).

No leaders

We are against hierarchy: that is, we don't want to have leaders, rather we should all take responsibility to organise ourselves as equals. We are against both formal leadership roles and “informal” hierarchical structures. Anyone who dominates others should be challenged.

Openness

The network is open to anyone who shares the basic principles. The participation of people whose immigration status puts them at most direct risk from immigration raids is encouraged and supported. But migrants should not have to stand alone in this struggle, we are all implicated in this fight. All who participate in the Network should do so as equals, treating each other with respect, directness and honesty.

Who is behind the Anti Raids Network?

The network was set up in spring 2012 by a number of London-based groups, including the Latin American Workers' Association (LAWAS), No Borders London, South London Anti-Fascists, Precarious Workers Brigade, The Prisma, Stop Deportation, South London SolFed, People's Republic of Southwark, as well as independent individuals – with and without papers. The network evolved into a decentralised structure of local Anti Raids groups, as well as various individuals producing and disseminating materials for the network.

The information in the ‘know your rights’ cards and the workshops has been thoroughly researched and produced in conjunction with immigration lawyers. Translations have been proof-read at least twice.

Haringey Anti-Raids

Haringey Anti-Raids was formed in September 2016. A month later, we held our first street stall outside Seven Sisters tube station where we hand out rights information and information about how to challenge raids. Since then, we've held stalls most weekends, organised workshops and socials and had thousands of conversations about immigration raids, border imperialism, gentrification and a wide array of other topics.

Confronting The Raids - How To Say No To Immigration Officers



An anonymous contributor to the Anti-Raids blog shares their experiences directly challenging immigration enforcement.

I was cycling around in South London when I caught sight of those garish immigration arrest vans heading down the road. I was on my bike with some time to spare so took up position a few vehicles behind them and started following to see if they were going on a raid. Of course they were and it didn't take very long for them to come to a stop on Copeland Road in Peckham and pile out.

Still on my bike while they were on foot, I knew I could get to whatever place they wanted to raid before them, but I had to wait to see where they were going. There were about eight of them, and a few started to try and film me on their personal phones. I stuck close

until it was obvious they were going to a hand car wash, so I went up ahead.

While I began speaking with the guys there about their rights (primarily that they didn't have to speak with them at all and could ask them to leave), the immigration officers hurried up and tried to interrupt our conversation. None of the workers spoke with them and just carried on with their work, so the officers asked around for a manager.

A man walked over and I was able to get next to him when the two immigration cops who looked like they were in charge of things started to make demands of him. While they were talking I kept repeating that he could ask them to leave and didn't have to answer these questions. Other immigration officers attempted to distract me by making all sorts of threats of arrests to me and the workers.

However, at this point the man from the car wash told the officers that he would not be engaging with them and that they could basically pack up and be on their way.

Apparently one of them (whose festival wristband indicated was fresh back from acting like a human at Boom Town Festival) didn't quite get this and reached into his stack of papers to produce a consent form. His boss told him that in fact they had not received consent, but his first reaction shows how these raids typically go. These officers show up, force their way in, boss people around and then, regardless of what people say, shove a consent form in their face to sign before beginning their arrests.

They seemed a bit flabbergasted by being told to leave and again returned to chin wagging in order to intimidate or otherwise socially engineer their way in. We kept repeating clearly that we weren't speaking with them and that their only job at that point was to disappear.

It was really nice when I went back to the car wash later and got another chance to speak with the man about what had happened. He thanked me for being there and for telling him that he did not have to answer any questions and could ask them to leave, as he hadn't known that before. He said if I hadn't been there he probably would have let them make their checks because none of his workers had any problems, but then that also wasn't really the point.

I thanked him for trusting me in that moment when facing quite a stressful situation. He said that he could also tell the immigration officers were nervous about me being there, and that sensing their fear of the confrontation also gave him the courage to tell them to leave. He said he'd told the story to his friends also working and owning businesses in Peckham who couldn't believe it. They didn't know that immigration officers couldn't come in to a business without the owner's consent or some paperwork, and that it was possible for them to be sent packing just like that.

I left some information leaflets with him and he said he'd distribute them around and share his success story. We'll for sure be in touch in the weeks to come, and I imagine it will be more difficult for them to "get consent" for their raids in Peckham in the future.

Anyways, back to the day of the attempted raid and when they got back in their vans. I let them know I'd be on them for the rest of the day and that they could expect similar results from any other raid they may have planned. They seemed happy enough with this and told me they were going to Wembley, goading me to join them. Cycling after them at this point was when it first started sinking in that we'd already stopped one raid and potential arrests and imprisonments from happening. I made the decision then and there that I would not leave those vans until I could no longer ride my bike, or I saw them going back into their base.

The whole thing for the next hour or so was quite childish really. They stopped on Camberwell Road for a “fake raid” or something where they basically went en masse to buy chocolate and snacks in a corner shop. On the way out, one of them (the same guy who did not understand the word ‘no’ before and tried to get his consent form signed anyway) told me a residential post code over in Wembley where they were going. I don’t know if he was trying to scare me with the prospect of a long cycle, but I thought he was really dumb to say where they were heading next and I was able to pass on that information. In fact, the whole day this guy was acting like a joker. While in traffic he was hanging his head out of the window trying to offer me some snacks and make some comments about my condition.

Anyway, after their snack break they then tried to work me out by taking me on a tour of South London’s hills at the public’s expense. I wasn’t bothered at all as I cycle miles back and forth to work everyday, and I really enjoyed the chance to stretch my legs on the weekend. Plus, as any cyclist knows, in London cars can only get about 200 yards before some red light or traffic stops them, so it was actually very easy to stay with them. The whole time I was thrilled to know that while they were busy trying to get rid of me they were not going to be able to try and lock up someone else. I knew I had gotten in their heads.

In the end they seemed to tire of going nowhere in traffic all because of some pesky guy on a bike, and they started

to take a more definitive route north to London Bridge. This is when I first started to allow myself to think that, after intervening in their first raid, I’d be able to send them back home without being able to make another one. The closer we got to London Bridge the happier I felt.

Towards the end, around Elephant and Castle and Borough, they started driving really erratically and recklessly. They tried pushing me into the curb, cutting me off on corners, and tried to overtake me on dangerously small roads. I knew though that these were the death rattles of their day’s work and that I’d already won. They were pissed off and frustrated. They’d tried to lose me, they’d tried winding me up, but just a bit of persistence and a leisurely cycle ride on a beautiful London day is all it actually took to stop the massive machinery of imprisonment and deportation from working for a few hours.

I was joined by another friend on their bike for the last bit of the trip (many more people were on the way down) and when the vans pulled back into their base we all got to have words. They seemed awfully proud of the fact that they had been paid for the past couple hours of trying to tire me out and make their escape. They further demonstrated their ignorance of the concept of institutional racism (as one might expect). In general, it turned a bit school yard and they got hustled inside by one of their colleagues before any of them brought Her Majesty’s Government into further disrepute. In

my final words to them I let them know we'd always be there to ruin their day again.

The point though is that on Saturday a lot of people were out there with me on the bike and standing alongside those workers at the car wash. What we were able to do, in turning away and chasing back to their lair two vans full of well-resourced state agents used to getting their way, was only possible because of everything that has happened before.

All the interventions people have been making, large and small, and all the non-cooperation which has been taking place. Remember they were shouted out of Peckham before, and they are always scared of another East Street. Our personal strength comes from each other, as well as the threat of our power, and it's all of our responsibilities to maintain this level of confrontation and disruption even if we can't see or don't know one another.

Tips for those catching sight of these vans while out and about:

- Always, always, always follow the vans if you can! We know what they are up to and we know we can stop it!
- Don't let them know they are being followed until you want to be noticed. We decide when we want to reveal our hand, and there is power in that which should not be given up lightly. Of course, different levels of visibility are important for different tactics but have a think about that stuff beforehand.
- It's best if you can get to their target before they do and warn people there; however, even if that's not possible always do what you can. We don't know how our presence will effect these things, but we know that the immigration cops scare easily.
- Don't get overwhelmed by trying to remember all the different things you could or should do. In the actual moment prioritize speaking to those getting targeted, then film, and then share what's happening with friends and people around you.
- When they are going around on the roads, relay their positions and directions of travel as often as possible so that the others mobilizing have accurate information to work from.
- Don't worry about chatting with them or telling them what particular variety of pond life they are if that's not your thing. Your presence is already enough, plus all of your friends on the way down might be better at it. Just like cops though it's often better to say nothing and remember or write down everything they say.
- Remember to stay safe and protect yourself! This includes in the street as well as in the virtual world. Use anonymous and encrypted messaging whenever possible, and delete information on your devices when it's no longer needed.

Resources and Links

Anti-Raids Network

The central Anti-Raids site has a wealth of information including bust-cards (translated into 25 languages), as well as posters, leaflets, and a blog documenting testimony of people challenging immigration raids.

<http://antiraid.net>

Against Borders for Children (Schools ABC)

Schools ABC organises a campaign to boycott the School Census – the government’s collection of country-of-birth and nationality data of school-children as part of a drive to create a hostile environment for migrant children. Visit their website to see how you can help keep immigration checks out of schools.

<https://www.schoolsabc.net/>

Homes Not Borders

Homes Not Borders campaigns against racist and discriminatory Right-to-Rent legislation that requires landlords and letting agents to check the immigration status of prospective tenants – turning them into amateur border guards.

<https://homesnotborders.net>

Docs Not Cops

Docs Not Cops is a group campaigning against charging migrants who use the NHS and the sharing of patients’ details with the home office.

<http://www.docsnocops.co.uk>

North East London Migrant Action (NELMA)

NELMA are a grassroots migrant solidarity group in North East London. They run a social centre for migrants (Akwaaba), accompany migrants without recourse to public funds to Section 17 hearings and campaign on a range of issues – from the deportation of rough sleepers to ending NRP status.

<https://nelmacampaigns.wordpress.com/>

SOAS Detainee Support

SOAS Detainee Support attempts to break the isolation of immigration detention by visiting and offering emotional and practical support to immigration detainees, as part of a campaign against borders and incarceration.

<https://soasdetaineesupport.wordpress.com/>

Haringey Migrant Support Centre (HMSC)

HMSC is a drop-in centre helping vulnerable migrants access free legal advice surrounding immigration, welfare and housing. They support over 2,000 migrants a year.

<https://haringeymsc.org/>