

Editorial: Our Captive Voice Will Be Heard

Irish Republicans have always recognised that resistance to British misrule does not end upon their arrest. The battles to be fought and the tactics to be employed may change but the enemy remains the same.

Throughout the years, Irish Republican prisoners of war (POWs) have challenged all attempts by our captors to criminalise us and our struggle. Between 1976 and 1981, our comrades endured the Blanket and no-wash protests during which time many men and women were forced to live in empty cells, with only a blanket to cover their nakedness. They were forced to smear their own excrement on the walls of the cells where they were held 24 hours a day, month after month, year after year. These protests culminated in the deaths of ten of our comrades on hunger strike between March and September, 1981.

In the words of our comrade, Bobby Sands, who died on hunger-strike:

The jails are engineered to crush the political identity of the captured republican prisoner, to crush his/her resistance, and to transform him/her into a systemised answering-machine with a large criminal tag stamped by oppression upon his/her back, to be duly released on to the street, politically cured – politically barren – and permanently broken in spirit.

We have consistently refused to be criminalised and have been strident in our determination to make our voice heard. Some years ago we established a quarterly magazine. *The Captive Voice/An Glór Gafa* is a collection of writings of Irish Republican POWs currently held in Ireland, England, Europe and the United States. Our writings are a tribute not only to our families, friends, and comrades, whose strength and support have been inspirational to us all, but they are also a clear recognition that we are what we are – political prisoners, unbroken in our deep-rooted desire for freedom.

Our writings give us the opportunity to present in print our views on those topics and issues that affect daily life both inside and outside the jails. Our writings contain our political analyses of current national and international affairs, culture, short stories, poetry, and the latest updates on prison-related campaigns and issues. Satire and humour can also be found in our writings. We hope, through our writings, to share our feelings and experiences in a way that is both enjoyable and beneficial to those who read them.

We are determined that our message and our captive voice shall be heard by many. We welcome correspondence with ideas, suggestions or comments on the contents of our writings or on any subject of concern to Irish POWs.

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