R2K Task Force Update

The following communication was submitted on behalf of the Boston Philly Defense Group to the R2K Task Force of BGAN on January 6, 2001. It summarizes the ongoing support work on behalf of activists who were arrested during protests against the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia.

What's up with legal defense from Philly?

January 6, 2001

Hi, friends,

This is the first half of a much-too-late update on the situation of folks from the Boston area who were arrested in Philadelphia this summer, and on the support activities on their behalf. This message will talk more about where things are organizationally, and the next message will detail specific developments over the past several months. There's been a lot going on, and it is not over yet. Please read on.

After the convention when our friends and loved ones were still in jail, an ad hoc group teamed up to work on their behalf, raising funds for bail and defense and holding a very successful press conference outside the State House. Once people were out of jail, some amount of support activities continued but they were not all that coordinated.

Then in late September, an organizer contacted people for the first meeting of a defendants' and supporters' group. That meeting was advertised on this list. The group that met there eventually came to call itself the Boston Philly Defense Group.

Some have asked why this group did not simply identify itself as the post-Philly incarnation of the BGAN R2K task force. To be clear, the group was not trying to distance itself from the BGAN R2K group in any way. Indeed, it includes many members of the BGAN R2K group. However, it includes many whom do not identify as BGAN members as well. Moreover, there were discussions on this list and elsewhere of the R2K group reforming itself as a task force within BGAN to focus on issues like the prison crisis, welfare "reform," and other domestic faces of corporate globalization. As the Defense Group was created to focus specifically on legal defense and solidarity, we chose to identify ourselves as a distinct (but certainly overlapping!) group.

But here we have to apologize. After the first few meetings, we did not do a very good job of keeping people up to date on the group's activities or on defendants' legal situations (with the exceptions of some big events, like the benefit concert in late October).

Why has this happened? It's hard to say. The Philly Defense Group has been a group of about a dozen or so people working hard and under deadlines, and often we've focused on just getting work done and allowed outreach and updates to our supporters to fall by the wayside. We've also been dealing with some rather complicated legalities with a lot of technical language that we've been struggling to learn, and when you're dealing with something specialized like that, it can be easy to neglect to explain it to others. But these are just possible explanations that don't change the fact that we should have been doing more to keep you up to date on our work. And we apologize.

We plan to give much better updates in the future, starting with the next part of this message. And we also want to appeal for your involvement and help. There are still defendants facing trials, including Camille Vivieros, a friend of many in the Boston area who faces multiple felony charges. Two others from Boston facing misdemeanor charges will have their trials in late January with a judge who is a former police officer. There is still more to do to spread the message about why people were protesting in Philly, so that the continuing trials can serve as opportunities for popular education.

And there is much more. Please get in touch with us--respond to this message or write to *bostonr2k@yahoo.com*. And for continuing updates and background information, please visit *www.r2kphilly.org*--the site is maintained by web designers many of us know, and it's really phenomenal.

Thanks very much, everyone, for your continued solidarity and help.

For the Boston Philly Defense Group,

Matt