

## 40 years later, Troubles still roil

This Monday marked the 40th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, the day in which the British military murdered 14 Irish Republican protesters who had nonviolently assembled to protest the internment, without trial, of Republican prisoners in the city of Derry, Northern Ireland. The day became remembered as a symbol of the brutality of British rule over Ireland's Catholic population, and the informal beginning of the 26-year long low-intensity conflict known as The Troubles. After ceasefire agreements in 1998, The Troubles became "over" in the public's mind, at least to the U.S.

The ongoing conflict between Unionists and Republicans in the UK-controlled Irish province of Ulster continues to produce casualties, but they're occurring more slowly. The human rights abuses perpetrated by the Royal British Constabulary and the British-controlled legal system against Republicans it deems "terrorists" have replaced the active violence of the late 20th century. The frequent capriciousness of these charges reflects the initial complaints of the Derry protestors 40 years ago, and how little progress has been made for human rights in the detention of Republican prisoners. The reign of terror against these prisoners started by Margaret Thatcher is ongoing. But instead of Bobby Sand's intentional martyrdom, today's slow victims of the Unionist prison system are solely and directly the result of inhumane treatment.

The British legal administration last year reintroduced indefinite internment of Republican prisoners without charge, while it continues to revoke the parole statuses of paroled prisoners and detain the infirm who are no threat to society. Martin Corey was imprisoned for IRA activity in 1973 when he was 19 years old, and was released in 1992. On April 16, 2010, almost 18 years after his original release, the police appeared at Corey's door and took him away to prison for no stated reason. He was simply informed that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had revoked his parole license because he was a "security risk," despite having taken no political action in the time he had been free.

The eventually successful campaign for the release of Republican prisoner Brendan Lillis highlighted the cruelty of the British administration against Catholic prisoners in Ireland, as a terminally ill, bedridden man was revoked of parole license and returned to prison for being a "danger to society." Marian Price is the only Republican prisoner in Northern Ireland, being held in solitary confinement in an otherwise all-male prison for her tenuous connection to IRA terrorist actions. Years of hunger strikes and the resulting force-feeding by the Unionist prison guards have led to severe anorexia nervosa and rheumatoid arthritis. Prisoner abuse is endemic among these prisons, and consists of humiliating and unnecessary daily cavity searches, and consistent patterns of brutal guard abuse to prisoners who decline searching. Beyond these examples, there are countless Catholic Republicans under Unionist custody in Northern Ireland who are being held without charge in inhumane conditions and whose captivity is used as a political weapon.

Let's remember the relevance of Troy Davis and Joe Arpaio in our country; the use of the police state as a deadly weapon against an ethnic population viewed by the state as second-class is not unique to this conflict. Maybe the arc of history has turned too far to restore a United Irish Republic. But the systematic torture of these prisoners proves that the burden of Union administration over the Catholic population of Ireland, in both Ulster and in the Republic, is unjust. When the Troubles stopped being an issue, people stopped seeing the abuses that still occur against the Irish people by Great Britain. The conflict should not die in public and political discourse, because it has not died in Ireland.