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What To Expect When You're Expecting Repression

William Gillis

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Most folks radicalized online in these recent years have virtually no knowledge of what serious state repression looks like, and that lack of preparation scares me to my bones.

SWAT raids, abductions, rape, torture blacksites, mock executions... those of us anarchists around from the counter-globalization era have experienced a vast array of state repression. The traumatized stories of our friends built up tacit knowledge that hasn't been fully conveyed to generations brought up on the internet.

Have no doubt, it's always only a matter of time. Raids will come.

House raids usually come down in the wee hours of the morning, almost always involve drawn assault rifles and flashbangs. One recurring favorite is hog-tying activists in their underwear or even naked on the front lawn and keeping them there for hours in the cold.

It should go without saying but obviously when cops raid family homes they are unrestrained in brutality towards small children.

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Pepperspraying them in front of bound parents, throwing them face first into the concrete, etc.

One particular trick the cops love pulling is breaking down a door with the SWAT team and then immediately threatening to arrest all the residents if they remain for living in an unsafe habitation that is not up to code (because the door is broken).

Cops are honestly pretty amazing at finding weird ways to abuse their supposed constraints. So like if they can only hold you without charges for two business days, they'll raid you Friday night, and then when they release you Wednesday promptly re-arrest you without charges.

Raids are primarily punitive so anything easily breakable in your house will be broken. But also expect every single piece of clothing and electronic device to be taken as "evidence" and held for years.

In this recent era the cops like to work hand-in-hand with fascist street gangs, typically they'll actively propagandize the arrest of leftists or anarchists and spread home information far and wide — typically followed up by home attacks by fash. Broken windows, shot pets, etc. In Hungary the police would undertake raids *alongside* neonazis, explicitly promising young punks that if they remained in the country they'd be murdered.

Remember of course that police arrests are often wildly uncorrelated with any sort of criminal behavior. They will actually usually let you go after destroying your house, abducting and torturing you because they'll just decline to file charges (since there are none to file).

Of course the other direction is to file every single absurd thing they can even remotely think to throw at you to scare you. For example my friend Pax got charged with 72 felonies (every single vandalism of a bank over two years in three states)... they ended up with a misdemeanor.

Don't be surprised when police wildly and even publicly violate constitutional rights — this is calculated. Police departments have

giant pools of insurance money precisely to be free to eventually pay out in a few cases, years later.

For example, the FBI used a pipe bomb to try and murder IWW organizer Judi Bari in 1990. Folks won a couple lawsuits many years later but after her death. No real damage was done to the Oakland PD or the FBI for their roles minus some money, they *expect* this kind of result.

We can of course go back further to the MOVE bombing when the police dropped a bomb from a helicopter and destroyed an entire city block of residences to get one group. Or the various open assassinations of students/activists around that time.

It's important to note that these earlier extreme acts of slaughter of activists by police are still living memory — not just for survivors — but for the perpetrators as well. Former Portland Police Chief Mark Kroecker back in 1970 marched in the LAPD tac squad beating/murdering activists chanting “kill kill kill”... In the early 00s he was appointed chief of the Portland Police, only to later train the police and militaries of Israel and Liberia in repression, before finally serving as head cop at the UN.

None of the cops responsible for past assassinations/tortures disappeared, they're still there.

And the very few officers ever fired from one department for egregious crimes invariably were re-hired at a different department.

Every police atrocity since the 60s you think is distant past? The perpetrators are still wearing badges. They're RESPECTED for their acts.

In Portland Mark Kruger, the police officer caught making a literal nazi shrine in a public park, not only kept his badge, he was put in charge of the gang task force that largely avoided targeting the various white nationalist gangs that control most of East PDX.

Being an anarchist is a tough road. The toughness of this commitment is not so apparent to folks who've converted online. But some random selection of you WILL be targeted, probably just for

shit like having a twitter. And you need to be mentally prepared for the slog.

I worry deeply that people will panic and try to respond in a paranoid, traumatized information vacuum. The best way to avoid that is to make plans today for when the raids come. Here are some very simple but important preparations you can make:

1) Create and hide/bury outside of your home encrypted USBs (you can use something like keepass or veracrypt depending on what you need) to backup information like passwords that you'll need once all your electronic devices are destroyed by cops or kept as evidence for years.

2) Activate full disc encryption on every device you have. Use unique long passphrases — like seven random dictionary words. Keep those devices turned off when you aren't actively using them. If they're taken while on the encryption is meaningless.

3) Write up a document outlining what needs to be done when you're in prison (eg feeding your cats, photos of them in case the cops let them loose and they need to be found, how to pay your rent, contact your work, medicine/etc issues, legal defense plan, etc)

4) Make private plans with trusted friends, couches to crash on when your house is destroyed, etc. Hand them planning documents and copies of USBs. (One way to protect an encrypted USB is to give different parts of the password to different friends so they have to collaborate to decrypt in the event of your imprisonment or murder.)

5) This can also be the time to ask friends to hold onto caches of basic necessities you might need after the swat team destroys all your stuff or seizes it — in case they're able to bail you out — extra changes of clothes in your size. etc.

6) You can also set up caches buried in wilderness areas for such plans / bare necessities / encrypted usb's. Obviously don't

bring your phone or other GPS device along when you set these up.

7) If you have all the money in the world it's worth keeping a lawyer on retainer and a pile of money to be used to bail you out (that isn't in a seizeable bank account or location).

8) Make advanced concrete plans with your friends and other radicals in the area about (a) how to deal when the undercovers are inevitably exposed, (b) how to coordinate everyone's legal defenses. Because breaking ranks for plea deals? GETS YOU WORSE DEALS.

Obviously a lot of the time you can't prepare for specific charges because whatever they'll throw at you will be obvious random bullshit. "Criminal conspiracy to jaywalk in furtherance of terrorism." But that's sufficient for RICO, grand juries, and a years long case while held. Every round of raids is always absurd & disconnected from reality. You find out your manicurist & librarian were undercover cops, your ex is turning state's witness, they have you on tape joking about jaywalking, facing 12 years. Don't get hung up on planning for the details.

You can't always prepare for the specifics, but you can prepare in broad strokes. It's really important to have figured what the community's standards and expectations are. It shouldn't be a surprise to some to learn "we don't talk to grand juries, ever" is a community rule.

Finally — more specific to today's context — expect the cops to dox you and then have reactionaries try to finish you off. They'll post your mugshot, home address, phone number, and you'll get 100,000 fox news boomer idiots calling you and neonazis shooting up your house.

The worst thing you want to do in a crisis is be shellshocked, treating each new development or complication as a wild new totally unpredictable thing. Don't waste your time enunciating what has just happened with your friends. Follow the plans. A blueprint will save your sanity.