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Quentin defense demands mistrial

Guardian Bureau

San Rafael, Calif.

Defense attorneys in the San Quentin Six case moved for a mistrial here after San Quentin prison officials leaked stories to the press implying one of the inmate-defendants had been caught attempting to escape.

Officials told the media that a "clanging sound" in the predawn hours alerted guards in the maximum security Adjustment Center (AC) section of the prison. Guards who went to investigate found that the bars on the cells of two inmates had been partially or totally sawed through, according to this report. Officials refused to say which prisoners had been involved, but stated that one was involved in a "current Bay Area murder case." Most of the local media reported it as involving one of the San Quentin Six.

Members of the defense team and supporters of the six Black and Latin defendants responded with anger and disbelief. Several pointed out that if anyone in the AC did escape from his cell, he would still be locked on the tier, inside a locked building, within the heavily guarded walls of a locked prison. "Where would anyone have gone if he sawed his way out of his cell?" was a common reaction. A prison spokesman suggested that the intent would have been to take hostages, but no weapons were reported found, nor did the prison claim to have located the tool they allege was used to cut through the bars.

What angered the defense most was the broad implication made by the prison that "one of the Six" was involved. "What they were trying to do was give the overall impression that any one of the Six might have been trying to escape," a member of the defense team told the Guardian. "This was a clear-cut attempt to prejudice the minds of the jurors just before final arguments begin."

The final arguments in the case are due to start June 21, and are expected to last two weeks. Then the jury will begin its deliberations. K.W.

Guardianphoto by Morris Wright



Some 200 people marched through Kentfield, Calif., last week, to "Free the San Quentin Six."

Guardianphoto by George Cohen



Headquarters in New York City June 13.

as the march, the demonstrators proceeded to the World Zionist Headquarters. There a spokesperson from the Jewish contingent of the march spoke to the crowd: "Zionism is not in the interest of Jewish people, but an enemy of Jewish people. Zionism tries to align Jewish people with the imperialists. . . . Zionism has tried to lead Jews into alliances with the world's most reactionary, racist, anti-Semitic forces—Vorster of South Africa, the Phalange in Lebanon, Nixon and his cohorts, the Chilean junta. These are the forces of the past, and our interests lie with the forces of the future." The Jewish contingent carried signs reading "Fight Anti-Semitism, Zionism and all forms of racism" and "Solidarity with Progressive Jewish Forces in Palestine."

At the conclusion of the rally, greetings and messages of solidarity were given by the American Indian Movement, Irish Republican Clubs, Palestine Solidarity Committee, Puerto Rican Socialist Party, Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, Palestine Red Crescent Society and the Eritreans for Liberation in North America.

The action was organized by the Palestine Action Coalition, composed of 22 anti-imperialist and progressive groups.

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