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Tuesday 7 May 2024, by [CONWAY Terry](#) (Date first published: 5 May 2024).

In a major show of May Day solidarity, several hundred protestors in Peckham, South London managed to block the removal of a coach load of asylum seekers to the prison barge, the Bibby Stockholm. The barge, [where an Albanian man killed himself last December and which is also thought to be warehousing torture victims](#), is expected to be a staging post to Rwanda - despite the fact that it is understood flights are not yet ready to try.

The raid came less than a week after the Tory's notorious Rwanda Act finally received royal assent on 25 April after the House of Lords attempts to water down the bill finally ran out of steam. Perhaps more tellingly, it came the day before many local and mayoral elections in England. (There were no elections in Scotland on 2 May, and in Wales only elections for Police and Crime Commissioners.) Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was determined to try and stem the tide of support bleeding away from his chronically failing government by focusing minds on his determined anti-immigration stance.

On Sunday 27 April, the government had announced the Home Office would launch "[a major operation to detain asylum seekers across the UK in preparation for their deportation to Rwanda](#)", some weeks before they were expected to act. While immigration raids have been standard part of the British state's "hostile environment" long before the Rwanda legislation was agreed, there was no doubt that this was an escalation and one happening with the electoral timetable in mind. Campaigners also received information that some asylum seekers were receiving notices mentioning possible removal to Rwanda.

Activists responded quickly through existing networks mainly built in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement and the fight against the repressive Police Bill. Stalls were organised near immigration reporting centres to reach as many asylum seekers as possible and inform them, in a variety of languages, that despite recent legal changes, they do still have some rights. At the same time messages went out widely on social media alerting a wider network of people that they might be called on at short notice to block a removal.

For seven hours protestors blockaded the road outside the hotel where the asylum seekers are currently housed, with calls for additional bodies going out throughout the day. At [3pm](#) the coach finally left - empty. Forty-five activists were arrested. Meanwhile campaigners in Portland Dorset where the barge is moored are also keeping a close eye to block any further arrivals.

But while May Day was a victory for international solidarity, on Friday 3 May at least two other raids took place in different parts of London - in [Hounslow](#) and in [Croydon](#). At the former, the coach was delayed for some time by activists but they were not able to prevent people being taken away in the end. It is not clear what happened in Croydon since the initial call out, but no doubt there will be

increasing calls for action on the streets in the weeks ahead.

This is what solidarity looks like, as those fleeing the destruction capitalism has wrought to their homes are subject to yet further inhuman treatment.

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For further information see the [Migrants Organise website](#).

P.S.

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