

**Text of Anarchist comrade Giannis
Michailidis on the struggle for his
release**



**Greece
2023**

Position of Giannis Michailidis on the struggle for his release

Introduction

As I enjoy my freedom again, won through my second hunger and thirst strike, I reflect on the complex historical mosaic that not only shaped my personal choices but also wove the collective struggle against the state-capitalism complex. Far from being solitary acts of assertion, the hunger strikes were instead part of the social antagonism within the complex dynamics taking shape in Greece and the global landscape as the assault of the dominant powers deepens.

The backdrop in which these hunger strikes unfolded is characterised by profound global challenges, where the grip of capitalism has led to an alarming concentration of wealth and therefore power in the hands of a select few. Meanwhile, the vast majority of humanity lives in extreme poverty, crushed by the burden of industrial production and the relentless pursuit of profit by corporations. At the same time, the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources has brought the planet dangerously close to the brink of irreversible climate change and has caused an unprecedented mass extinction of species.

In this web of power, States, whether Western or Eastern, impose their power by claiming a monopoly of violence. They blatantly wipe out entire populations with state-of-the-art weapons of mass destruction or use more subtle tactics, such as weaponizing hunger by systematically dismantling vital infrastructure in conflict-ridden areas. The world is on the brink of collapse because of nuclear arsenals ready to wipe it out in an instant. Stripping away the harsh reality, the real agents of terror are revealed – the States. In these circumstances, as I reflect on the battle for my personal freedom, I recognise its connection with the wider struggle from which my prolonged imprisonment had temporarily distanced me.

This is not intended to elicit sympathy or victimisation; rather, it is a statement of my identity as an active social and political subject: I see my imprisonment as only one aspect of the merciless attack launched by the State and capital against those who consciously challenge their authority. Therefore, I have issued an invitation to re-establish the link between the struggle for the liberation of imprisoned anarchists and the basic ideals that sparked their resistance and led to their imprisonment. I called for a relationship grounded in revolutionary solidarity, based on common goals and a collective struggle that encompasses diverse dimensions. This connection unites individuals facing different circumstances but converging on a common cause, cultivating a collective strength that transcends personal struggles.

1: In the dungeons of injustice

Within the temples of institutionalized injustice that characterizes the prison system, a long journey began that would eventually culminate in two difficult hunger strikes. These strikes were motivated not only by a personal search for justice, but also by the need to expose the pervasive corruption and arbitrariness inherent in the foundations of the judicial system. My ordeal began in 2011, when I faced an arrest warrant in connection with the Conspiracy cells of Fire case. That prosecution later collapsed, resulting in my acquittal due to the lack of a clear link between me and the charges. Two years of flight followed, marked by choices that ultimately led me to the prison gate. A ten-year prison term loomed over me, influencing my decisions. During this period, the vindictiveness of the State was always felt. My comrades and I endured brutal police violence when we were arrested in the bank robbery in Velvento, Kozanis, and an incident that remained invisible in the eyes of Greek justice. The Ministry of Public Order then chose an unusually provocative stance, publishing photographs of our battered faces.

This was soon followed by successive arrests, two of which were linked to the activities of the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire. The case files listed my name as a participant in acts with which I had nothing to do, without any evidence or testimony linking me to the charges.

The culmination of this judicial arbitrariness was my sentencing to an additional 11 years in prison for possession of cartridges, despite the fact that they were discovered in the house of a comrade, who told the court that they belonged to him. In a surreal mock trial, we were convicted of possessing the cartridges collectively in order to individually carry out “individual terrorism” based on alleged intentions. It is noteworthy that this case, full of absurdity, is the only application of the law on individual terrorism in Greek judicial history. The fact that the Supreme Court upheld this unprecedented farce is evidence of the extent to which the so-called “independent” judiciary is entangled in party politics and government directives, consistently exploiting the management of the advancement of judges to manipulate and control the outcome of trials. As I was about to finish my sentence, in 2019, a prosecution for alleged rioting in Korydallos was pulled out of the drawer against several comrades including me. As a result, my permits were cut off, and consequently I was deprived of the possibility of being in a rural prison. As it was obvious that my prison sentence was now much longer than expected, I chose to escape, a choice that the State would later, after my arrest in January 2020, retaliate harshly for.

As of 29 December 2021, I had completed 3/5 of my merged sentence of 20 years, plus 2/5 of the sentence for escape, for a total of 8 years and 3 months of actual sentence. The prison secretariat invited me to sign a demand for conditional release, as required by law. However, this seemingly simple procedure introduced me to another chapter of state vindictiveness, characterized by the denial of parole. This time, I was deemed potentially dangerous, a ridiculous pretext for continued incarceration based on the arbitrary belief that sufficient time had not elapsed for my “rehabilitation” and

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After the strike I suffered an experience that is good to share for the self-protection of those who struggle through the means of the hunger strike. While the doctors at the Voulas area Asklipio Hospital (Athens) were supportive of me throughout my stay there, their ignorance of the consequences of introducing vitamin serum during refeeding led to a dangerous situation. Obviously they could not have dealt with a similar case of someone being resuscitated from such prolonged starvation and dehydration before and the protocols they applied are internationally deficient.

My body, during the strike, had adapted to the lack of nutrients and vitamins, resulting in over-absorption of the vitamins introduced in the resupply, causing hypervitaminosis. This led to refeeding syndrome, resulting in me suffering and convulsing for 8 hours until the doctors realized the mistake.

Unfortunately, although not all refeeders’ bodies react this way, this rare condition has led to several hunger strikers in the past losing their lives or being left disabled during refeeding or force-feeding. It is necessary, through information, to ensure that such mistakes are not repeated in the future and that hunger strikers receive appropriate medical treatment during and after their struggle.

This experience can be a lesson for the future and I hope that it will contribute to the self-protection of hunger strikers, as well as to improving the approach and care of medical staff.

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OCTOMBER 2023**

lation, with the risk of stifling individual autonomy and creativity. Decentralised networks and communities allow for flexibility and diversity, but can fail where coordination is needed. To cope with this dilemma, we can explore new tools and implement grid structures that maintain decentralization while enabling coordinated efforts. This approach encourages participation in multiple communities, spreading ideas and preventing the consolidation of power within any single group, and the imposition of one group-community over another.

As we look ahead, the continuation of the struggle is an obvious necessity. It is a journey marked by uncertainty, challenges and failures, but it is also fuelled by an unshakable belief that the world is reshaping itself every moment and that our stance matters. The road to liberation is long and winding as we rotate and regress between different perspectives and practices in the direction of our ideals. It is illuminated by the collective spirit of those who dare to dream, resist and persevere. Our work is not over; it is ongoing, ever-evolving and deeply interconnected with the larger mosaic of resistance against oppression and injustice.

In the face of this savage attack on life itself launched by the State-capitalist system, it is imperative that we organise and resist, rejecting the hierarchical structures that act as a lever of manipulation, either to perpetuate the existing system or to assimilate the forces of resistance. The road to liberation lies in linking different struggles against the mechanisms of State oppression, forging decentralized networks of eco-communities and communities of resistance. This convergence of efforts must become a new axis of radicalisation, weakening our dependence on the capitalist-industrial complex that is ravaging the earth and endangering our very existence and the existence of so many other organisms.

**SOLIDARITY WITH THE OCCUPATIONS
FREEDOM TO THE PRISONERS
UNTIL THE DESTRUCTION OF THE LAST CAGE**

supposed correction. This ridiculous argument, an argument that runs counter to logic itself as the longer one stays inside, the more difficult it becomes to reintegrate, is used repeatedly, mutilating the lives of countless prisoners.

At the same time that those who have the financial means or the right connections benefit from early release and parole, those who decide with dignity to rebel or escape are characterized as insubordinate and are deprived of their right to freedom after completing their sentence, under funny pretexts. This is just one example of how officials of the system handle the law, as those who use these legal windows against us often reach high positions, building their careers on the backs of vulnerable prisoners who are sentenced to long sentences. This inequality is defiantly highlighted in ‘their own children’, who benefit from the leniency of the system, securing their release or even avoiding incarceration altogether.

A provocative example is the case of Korkoneas, the policeman responsible for the murder of the comrade Alexandros Grigoropoulos. The judicial system was quick to secure his early release. Such special treatment was also accorded to the police officers who deliberately killed Nikos Sambanis in Perama and to the prison guards who tortured to death Ilir Kareli, who were acquitted.

2: The hunger strike as an experience and as a weapon

The decision to go on hunger strike was a deeply personal and emotionally charged choice. It was not a decision taken lightly, but one that arose from a deep yearning for my lost freedom and an unwavering will to highlight systemic injustice in a way that would have the deepest possible social impact.

At its core, the hunger strike goes beyond mere protest; it becomes an indelible experience. It is a means of transforming the ordeal into an experience, bringing you closer to those who endure hunger on a daily basis. As I voluntarily embraced hunger, a connection was created within me between my deprivation and the suffering

of countless individuals worldwide who struggle to find food.

This feeling is not only about human hunger; it extends to the hunger of animals forcibly expelled from the land, their homes and their means of subsistence, which are being taken over and exhausted by the expansive mechanism of industrialisation. The act of hunger strike can be experienced as a state of connection with these deprived souls, human and animal, suffering under the weight of ecological destruction and capitalist greed.

Beyond the physical ordeal of hunger, the hunger strike has a profound symbolic weight. It serves as a channel for expressing the deep-rooted frustration and anger that have built up over years of imprisonment, arbitrary actions and prevailing injustice. It is a raw, raw cry against a system that has declared war on the principles of justice and freedom.

In my view, the hunger strike is not only a struggle for personal freedom; it is a passionate call to action. It is a stark reminder that the struggle for justice, equality and the dismantling of the gilded cage of industrial civilization requires an emotional and intensely personal effort for all of us. It is a call to unite, to forge an instinctive connection to the shared passion and aspirations that bind us in this ongoing struggle.

The experience of the hunger strike represented an act of personal rebellion, rooted in the conviction that my prison situation was not exclusively mine, but part of a wider attack by the State and capital against all those who dare to resist. It has been an emotional journey, and I hope it serves as a rallying point for the larger struggle, uniting us in the relentless pursuit of freedom.

ongoing struggle for freedom, several key principles and ideas emerge. First, the undeniable power of collective action and solidarity. The battles we fought and the positive outcomes we saw were due to the collective efforts of those who stood by my side, both inside and outside the prison walls. Our strength lies in our solidarity, our ability to act together and our strong will for the common cause of freedom. This struggle cannot be a solitary effort; it belongs to those who choose to participate.

Our ability to challenge dominant ideologies and to envision a different world is proof of the power of creative resistance. Diversity is a cornerstone of our movement. The global anarchist movement draws strength from its decentralized nature, where the centralized left has often capitulated. Thus, we must continue to embrace diversity of thought, tactics and approaches. While it is necessary to engage in deep discussions and debates about our ideas, we must also cultivate a culture of tolerance for criticism. Constructive criticism can sharpen our perspectives and lead to the evolution of our movement.

In terms of ideas, we must remain open to a wide range of perspectives. Anarchy is not a monolithic ideology but a dynamic framework that encourages exploration and experimentation. While it is vital to challenge dominant narratives and question established norms, dogmatic adherence to particular ideas can lead to stagnation. The exchange of ideas and a willingness to adapt and grow intellectually is crucial to the vitality of our movement.

In terms of practice, we must remember that our ideas become meaningful through tangible achievements. Whether it is direct action, solidarity campaigns or community organisation, our principles must find expression in the real world. Concrete achievements not only reinforce the validity of our ideas but also inspire others to join our struggle.

Finally, in terms of organisation, we need to achieve a balance. Centralised structures can be prone to power dynamics and manipu-

mates who, in solidarity, have chosen to join this protest, whether through hunger or thirst strikes. However, it is of paramount importance to recognize that the most meaningful contribution to any hunger strike has been made by those and those who have suffered, endured or lost their lives in the relentless pursuit of justice and freedom through this form of resistance. To these courageous souls, I will owe every moment of freedom I enjoy.

But as I stand here now, free and outside the walls, I feel that my struggle remains incomplete as long as our comrade, Kostas Dimalexis, is behind bars. His imprisonment, which was linked to an act of solidarity during my previous hunger strike, continues despite the total absence of evidence to support the police's claims. Kostas steadfastly denies any involvement in the action, but proudly declares his anarchist political identity. The outcome of his upcoming trial is particularly crucial, as a possible conviction would constitute a direct attack on the solidarity relations that underpin the anarchist movement.

The struggle against judicial arbitrariness against anarchists and resistance in general also remains incomplete, as long as militants such as Nikos Maziotis and Dimitris Koufontinas remain in prison after completing their sentences under the same ridiculous legal pretexts. It is also crucial to resist the indefinite imprisonment of militants.

And the struggle against power is of course incomplete as long as there are cells and cages to torture human and non-human souls for the purpose of maintaining the legal order of this system or capitalist production.

8: The struggle continues

I narrated a journey through my experiences, struggles and reflections, talking about the events and ideas that shaped my path. It was a time of resistance, resilience and the relentless pursuit of freedom. As I reflect on these experiences within the larger context of the

3: The chronicle of the first hunger strike

One of the most remarkable aspects of the hunger strike was the groundswell of support it generated. During the first hunger strike, the response from comrades and beyond, both in Greece and around the world, was unexpected. It was a proof of the enormous power of solidarity and our common desire to challenge the system. As I embarked on this grueling march, I felt a deep connection being forged with those who stood beside me in this act of resistance, and that the message I was sending out would have long-term effects that would likely not be seen in the present or in the immediate future.

Within the walls, to see so many comrades enduring the same hunger in the pursuit of justice and freedom was deeply encouraging. This collective action served as a powerful reminder of the unbreakable bonds that unite us in our struggle against the power of the State and capital.

However, the reaction of the State has been far from what one would expect in the face of such widespread solidarity. Instead of responding to our demands to reduce the political and social costs, the State chose to reject my requests for parole, seeking to keep me imprisoned. At the same time, the judicial circus began releasing people convicted of heinous crimes, including rapists and the only one of Zac Kostopoulos' killers, while I continued my hunger strike for my freedom.

In the midst of these worrying developments, the hunger strike took on a new dimension. It was no longer just a personal struggle for freedom; it had become a symbolic resistance against a system that prioritized the release of murderers over the release of those who dared to oppose its power. It became a powerful reminder of the injustices perpetuated by the State and an urgent call for change.

Street justice, delivered by those who refused to forget and demanded justice for victims of police violence, became a powerful force for accountability. It served as a reminder that the struggle for justice extends beyond the confines of the courtroom and spills into the streets, where the memory of those lost to State violence remains alive.

In those moments, the hunger strike symbolized not only a personal search for freedom but also a collective demand for justice. It resonated as a call to action, and showed that in this world, true justice can only be achieved through our collective struggle. It had already become a resounding collective political act that resonates with our history and our ongoing struggle. It was a testament to the indomitable spirit of those who refused to forget, who persevered in their quest for justice and who carried the weight of our shared history on their shoulders.

4: The decision to suspend the hunger strike

In this text I have to submit my self-criticism for the critical moment when I took the painful decision to suspend the hunger strike. This choice had profound consequences, not only for me personally, but also for the broader movement because of the message of defeat it conveyed. It is imperative that I delve deeper into the circumstances and motivations that led to this wrong decision.

The suspension of the hunger strike was triggered by a series of unrealistic promises made by State officials. Their commitment was contingent on the condition that the agreement would remain confidential, and I, perhaps naively, assumed that they would on their part honour the agreement to avoid public exposure. This misjudgment was influenced, in part, by my isolation under the special detention regime, which severed my relationships with close comrades – those who possessed both the knowledge of the facts and the po-

litical party to consider the political cost of its actions.

I want to emphasise at this point that I am opposed to a perspective that gives priority to the “value of human life” over a struggle that may involve risking it. A radical critical perspective considers the value of all the lives lost to hunger caused by the desertification of industrialisation, or the lives lost in inter-state wars, at maritime borders, in industrial accidents or at the hands of the police. Therefore, under certain circumstances, I consider it a necessity to put our lives and health at risk in our efforts to confront this oppressive system, both inside and outside the prison walls; therefore, adherence to this strategy of managing the hunger and thirst strike is the central factor in the success that led to my gaining my freedom. Based on this approach, and with the invaluable support of all those in solidarity, inside and outside the walls, we were able to force the political and judicial authorities to consider the political cost of a possible hunger strike death, and ultimately, to find a solution that would lead to my release.

7: The conquest of my freedom belongs to those who are not with us today

With the announcement of the conclusion of the hunger and thirst strike, I felt it appropriate and necessary to express my deep gratitude to the countless individuals who have steadfastly supported me throughout this arduous journey, whether within the walls of the prison or outside its confines.

The achievement of my liberation cannot be attributed solely to my own efforts; on the contrary, it is proof of a collective effort that goes far beyond my individual actions. This success owes its existence to the fiery hearts that have personally suffered the burden of State repression, to the vast network of solidarity that has been meticulously woven over time, and to the fellow prisoners and in-

their intentions were not so much to address the legitimate demands of my hunger strike as to deceive me. They lured me with concessions, such as the promise of a permit, only to later postpone its implementation, revealing their lack of sincerity.

However, in light of the treatment I continued to receive and the unfulfilled promises repeatedly made, the hunger strike was announced. I felt an explosive urge to become politically active and expose the government's collusion with a self-styled justice system, even though I knew my speech could be challenged. A hunger strike, however, would not only highlight the issue at stake, but also definitively distinguish truth from falsehood.

6: The new hunger strike and the thirst strike

Armed with the hard-won knowledge from my previous experiences and determined not to repeat the same mistakes, I embarked on a new hunger strike with unwavering determination that left no room for retreat. This time, I took only steps forward and not a single step back in order to achieve my goals. Understanding the complexity and challenges of a hunger strike, I knew that meticulous planning and strategy were of paramount importance. In this context, I decided to escalate with a hunger strike, fully aware of the increased difficulty that would follow.

The decision to include the thirst strike was not an easy one, because it is an extremely exhausting form of struggle. The thirst strike, after four days, turned into a hard fight against myself as I felt my saliva drying up, leading me to a constant state of suffocation. My perseverance was intertwined with the conviction that ending the hunger strike immediately, either with some immediate material gain or destruction, was the only option. The goal was to end it before the upcoming second elections in Greece, strategically forcing the

political acumen to recognize the trap that had been set.

At that particular juncture, I was faced with an important dilemma. I had reluctantly accepted an offer from the State authorities, believing it to be the wisest option at the time. However, looking back, I cannot fully explain the rationale behind my decision and what compelled me to follow this path.

Several factors played a role in this decision. Firstly, the harsh and exhausting conditions in the context of the hunger strike had had a huge impact on me. The physical and emotional strain was overwhelming and I was beginning to doubt both the soundness of my own judgement and the ability of the movement to continue to support this struggle, especially during the summer holiday period. Second, I had been given false hope by government officials and the Supreme Court judge who served as a critical liaison between the judiciary and the government, and this undoubtedly influenced my choice. The empty promise of a favorable outcome exerted considerable influence in these circumstances.

However, it is vital to recognise that my decision extended beyond the personal consequences that I had to bear. The hunger strike was a collective effort and any outcome, whether positive or negative, was something I had to share with the wider solidarity movement that had been created. Furthermore, I felt a deep responsibility to record this outcome in the collective memory for future struggles.

Some critics – and rightly so at the time – argued that the hunger strike should never have been started in the first place, but my belief is that it was a necessary step. It was vital to defend the gains of the prisoners' struggles and to resist the judges' demands for statements of repentance. Admittedly, there were tragic errors in timing and lack of proper legal planning on my part, which contributed to the adverse circumstances that ultimately led to the suspension of my strike.

Despite the unfavourable outcome, this hunger strike managed to unite and mobilise our wider movement. It stood as a testament to our resilience, even in the face of difficult social conditions. The hunger strike also revealed the glaring contradictions within the ‘justice’ system. Moreover, the anarchist community showed remarkable solidarity through the support actions.

5: The interlude between two hunger strikes

The period between the suspension of the first hunger strike and the events that occurred that led to my decision to start a second hunger strike was extremely difficult. Very soon, it became painfully obvious that the promises made by state officials were nothing more than empty words.

Meanwhile, in the interval between the two hunger strikes, other painful incidents unfolded that further underlined the pervasive injustice of the judicial system. Comrade Costas Dimalexis was arrested and imprisoned accused of participating in an action in solidarity with my hunger strike. This arrest was made without concrete evidence to substantiate the claims of the prosecution mechanisms, revealing the arbitrary nature of the law enforcement actions. This arrest, which was accompanied by a police encirclement and invasion of the occupied refugee camps, rallied several solidarity comrades who fought a battle of dignity against repression.

In addition, another 15-year-old Roma boy, Kostas Fragoulis, was murdered in cold blood by the police, but it had become self-evident that no one would be held accountable or face imprisonment for this loss of life. It was another stark reminder of the impunity that cops enjoy. Despite this disturbing event, the reflexes on the part of our movement to this killing remained disappointingly muted, showing the difficult battle that had to be fought to address systemic injustices. This was followed by the tragic accident at Tempe,

where again the self-styled justice system, led by the same people who had mediated my deception, failed to bring any prosecution against the company executives and the politicians responsible for the loss of dozens of lives. This incident, however, succeeded in getting people back on the streets.

At the same time, I remained in the same situation for another year, waiting stoically for the predetermined decisions of the judicial councils that were inexplicably delayed. By December, I should have resumed my hunger strike, but the blow to my credibility, combined with the realization that I had fallen into the State trap, led me to the decision to wait for some legal developments that might make my path more manageable, such as the statute of limitations on the rigged case of the Korydallos riot.

During this period, every effort was made to deprive me of any legal right to permits, educational or tactical that could pave the way for my eventual release. The courts implicitly asked for statements of legitimacy, challenging me to answer whether my ideology allowed me to never break the law again. Essentially, they demanded a renunciation of my principles, my ideas and my personal relationships as a condition of my eventual release.

The State narrative then shifts to my transfer to Korydallos prison for educational purposes, a move that had been pending for over three years. Coincidentally, as I was informing my close comrades of my intention to start a new hunger strike while in Malandrinos prison, my transfer was suddenly announced, leading to a postponement of my hunger strike plans. With the subsequent rejection of my educational leave due to my alleged short stay in Korydallos prison, I found myself with no choice but to restart my hunger strike. Eventually a new series of promises followed which temporarily prevented me from announcing the hunger strike.

As negotiations with the State began, it quickly became clear that