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Two Long-Time Peace Activists Go on Trial in D.C. Superior Court for Lobbying Senate Staffers about Starvation in Gaza

WHO: Janice Sevre-Duszyńska, an ordained Roman Catholic Womanpriest from Towson, Maryland, and Max Obuszewski, a long-time Baltimore activist, were arrested on April 9, 2024 with 51 other members of Christians for a Free Palestine in the Dirksen Senate Office Building cafeteria. Sevre-Duszyńska and Obuszewski declined to pay out and were charged with D.C. Code 22-1307 Crowing, obstructing, or incommoding.

Sevre-Duszyńska, an ESL teacher in Kentucky, was arrested November 18, 2001 at Fort Benning, Georgia for protesting US involvement with death squads in Central America. She then served a three-month sentence in in federal women's prison in Lexington. KY.

Obuszewski has been arrested for protesting injustice at the National Security Agency, the Capitol, in Senate and Congressional offices, the White House, the Central Intelligence Agency and many other locales. These arrests may have led to his being under covert surveillance by the Maryland State Police, Baltimore Police Department Red Squad and other police groups in 2005 and 2006. He has spent time in several jails.

WHAT: The two defendants were disturbed by the Hamas attack on Israeli noncombatants on October 7, 2023. And they were even more disturbed by the ongoing attack on Palestinian noncombatants in Gaza. Like the International Court of Justice, the defendants believe there is a plausible case of genocide is taking place in Gaza. And they went to a cafeteria to highlight the fact that the people of Gaza are starving. Obuszewski was part of a human rights delegation organized by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee to Israel/Occupied Palestine during the first intifada. Sevre-Duszyńska taught ESL to Palestinian students. While attempting to lobby members of Senate staffs, they were arrested. At the trial, they will argue that they had to take action against U.S. complicity with genocide.

WHEN: Monday, November 18, 2024 at 9:30 AM

WHERE: Courtroom 310 in District of Columbia Superior Court, 500 Indiana Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20001

WHY: There is an ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip orchestrated by the Israeli government. Of particular concern to Christians for a Free Palestine, starvation is rampant among the Palestinians in Gaza. Some of the participants publicly prayed for peace across Gaza and Palestine, and carried banners that said “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9 in the Christian Bible) and “Woe to you who slay the hungry.” The call was for nourishing food to be sent to Gaza and an end to U.S. support including U.S. armaments. Also the group denounced Christian Zionism, and demanded that Congress take action for a permanent ceasefire, an end to U.S. arms to Israel, restoration of aid to UNRWA, and the release of all captives.

Utilizing their First Amendment rights, Sevre-Duszynska and Obuszewski went to the cafeteria to lobby Senate staffers to convince their respective senators to speak out against starvation and to call for humanitarian aid to pour into the Gaza Strip. Both defendants have been long-time lobbyists of their elected officials. Unfortunately their lobby visits are usually unsuccessful. However, they are quite aware that staff members are more receptive and more progressive. So they went to the cafeteria where staffers have lunch to impress upon them to convince their senators to condemn starvation in the Gaza Strip.