

# Kelly Rogers

## VP Welfare



I am an undergraduate student at the University of Birmingham - (at the time of writing) I am suspended from my course after having been unlawfully arrested at a national demonstration, and released without charge. I have no right of appeal, am banned from seeing my tutors or entering any university premises. My student union failed me - it condemned the actions of students, driven by valid political frustrations, and yet stayed silent on unlawful arrests, kettling, physical violence towards students and the political targeting of activists through suspensions, and threats of expulsion.

### \* 1. Do not betray students

My arrest, detention, onerous bail conditions and suspension were part of a much broader **criminalisation and repression of protest and student activism**, evident in universities across the country.

Students and student officers **must take direct action** because the power of strikes, occupation, and resistance are the only answer to the government's **cruel and unnecessary avsterity**. Time and time again the collective power of people organising and fighting has been the only thing that has cracked and broken governments.

Direct action is the only action that university managements, and governments, take seriously - which is why they crash down so incredibly hard.

## #donotbetraystudents

## ✖ 2. Do not betray students

From the kettling of teenagers, the beating and trial of the innocent Alfie Meadows, the ridiculous treatment of Frank Fernie - sentenced to 12 months in a young offender institution for throwing a placard stick at a police officer during an anti-cuts demonstration, to the aggressive prosecution of the peaceful occupiers of Fortnum & Mason, the mass arrests at the recent demonstrations in London, Sussex and Birmingham, and the suspensions of the Sussex 5 and the five students at Birmingham: we are seeing a crackdown on student protest at a dangerous and unprecedented level. We are seeing the force of capitalism, of greedy managements, and self-interested politicians, react against the legitimate and organic dissent of students. With more cuts and privatisation looming we are at a point where **students are more afraid of the future than prosecution**; at a point where action will continue - despite brutal repression.

But **where is the NUS?**

## ✖ 3. Do not betray students

Student officers have a particular responsibility to defend the interests of those who elected them, to fight for a better education - for public, democratic universities. My case illustrates how some **student unions are failing to represent us**. My suspension came without due process, and I have been declared **guilty until proven innocent**. At the time of writing, my President, Poppy Wilkinson - who is running for Block of 15, condemned me and my fellow students, and offered no support.

Instead of rallying around students, unions have been betraying student activists - betraying those who care more about the education of themselves, their friends and future students than their careers; unlike the **notorious NUS and union bureaucrats**. Year on year, the NUS has failed to organise students, failed to organise sufficient action, and failed to back the students taking the brunt of state and university repression.

It is time that the NUS, and student unions across the country, began to offer the support that students need; if we show that we can will protect students fighting for the education we all need, then we can **empower a generation** to take bigger and great actions.

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