

10 January 2024

Register to attend GCHQ ban anniversary march in Cheltenham

The march and rally in Cheltenham on 27 January marks the 40th anniversary of the ban on trade unions at GCHQ.

Announced at the [TUC special Congress](#) in London in December, a [joint PCS/TUC march and rally](#) will take place through Cheltenham on 27 January to mark the 40th anniversary of the ban on trade union membership at Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ).

On 25 January 1984, all GCHQ workers were ordered to leave their trade unions by 1 March or face dismissal. Those who signed away their rights received a payment of £1,000 less tax.

Over 100 GCHQ workers refused to sign away their union rights, but it wasn't until late 1988 that the government sacked the last 14 workers who were still holding out. You can [read more about the GCHQ campaign](#) and [look at our timeline](#) of how it started, what happened and when.

Members are encouraged to [register their attendance at the event](#) in Cheltenham with the TUC as soon as possible.

Alongside musical entertainment, several high-profile speakers from across the trade union movement, along with many members who were involved (or their families), are expected to speak at the event, including sacked GCHQ worker Alan Rowland.

Mark Serwotka, who retires as general secretary of PCS at the end of January, will give a speech, while PCS president and general secretary-elect Fran Heathcote will comper the rally.

Among those who have already been confirmed to speak from the wider movement are TUC general secretary Paul Nowak; FDA president Tony Wallace; Prospect general secretary Mike Clancy; Aslef general secretary Mick Whelan; and Unison general secretary Christina McAnea.

The march and rally on 27 January 2024 are not only a special commemoration of the ban and the unprecedented campaign which opposed it, they are also a chance to reflect on our own resistance to attacks on trade union freedoms today.

There will also be speakers at the rally representing other sectors who will be affected by the minimum services legislation which [threatens to strip the right to strike from thousands of our members in the Home Office](#).

The march is planned to start at Cheltenham's Montpellier Gardens at noon and end with a rally in Pittville Park. There will be a small covered area in the park for those who need it.

A special pamphlet and film are also being produced to mark the anniversary of the ban.

More information about the anniversary commemorations can be [found on the TUC website](#).

If members want to attend and need help with arranging transport, email campaigns@pcs.org.uk.