



Hundreds of G20 charges withdrawn

BY JUSTIN SAUNDERS AND MEGAN COTTON-KINCH

The legal prosecution of G20 political activists continued last week with the appearance of approximately 300 people at a courthouse in north Toronto amid a noticeable police presence. Over the course of the day, more than 100 people had charges withdrawn, 'diverted' or accepted an offer of a peace bond. Lead Crown Attorney Vincent Paris gave a statement on the proceedings outside the courthouse but declined to comment on individual cases.

Although diversion does not result in a conviction, as part of the process defendants typically 'accept responsibility' for actions in the form of a donation to charity or participation in a supervised program. Many people refused to participate in the diversion process and elected to have their day in court. Mac Scott, a legal worker with the Movement Defence Committee, noted that it is highly unusual for people to be offered diversion at this point in the court process, and attributed it to police actions during the G20 being "heavy handed and largely illegal...People were arrested indiscriminately and without evidence in a large number of cases."

Natalie Gray's arm and chest still bear marks from rubber bullet wounds. She is among several high profile G20 arrestees whose charges were dropped after evidence contradicting the police version of events was widely published. Gray's arrest made headlines after she was shot while attending a peaceful support rally outside the tem-



porary detention centre on Eastern Avenue. Police only admitted the use of rubber bullets when photo evidence emerged in the media. Gray is in the process of filing a lawsuit against the police. Also withdrawn were charges against media activist Lacy MacAuley, who was attacked by several officers, dragged into an unmarked van and assaulted, most of which was captured on camera. She was subsequently charged with assaulting a police officer.

MacAuley characterized the Crown's decision to drop her charges as part of a strategy to avoid embarrassment, and to isolate defendants who don't have clear video evidence exonerating them. "They want to sweep us under the carpet; they want us to go away...(but) we will not be silenced." She is now considering her options for pursuing

legal action against the police.

When asked if any officers would be charged for their actions during the summit, Paris replied that it was a "police matter", and implicitly defended command decisions to take over 1000 people into custody in the course of the G20 weekend.

Matthew Melancon, who along with dozens of other Quebec residents was picked up at a mass arrest during a raid on a University of Toronto student union, told the *Toronto Star*: "I wasn't there at the demonstration... yet they charged me with conspiracy for participating in a riot...I was sleeping at the University...and (was woken up by) dozens of cops with guns screaming at us." Most Quebec defendants are still facing charges and will have to return Toronto in October for more court appearances.

G20 IN NUMBERS

- 20 largest economies in the world
- 2 days of meetings
- 1.3 billion dollars spent
- 0.4 average of meeting commitments
- 25,000+ demonstrators in the streets
- 5 metres of imaginary forbidden space
- 1100+ arrests
- 306 with charges laid
- 4 people still in jail
- 104 diverted or withdrawn
- 61 accused of conspiracy and worse
- 20 years of planned austerity measures

JUSTIN SAUNDERS

Judicial Harassment of Activists Continues

System rigged against poor and racialized people

BY MEGAN COTTON-KINCH

Although the G20 was in June, arrests and re-arrests of activists continue as part of a general pattern of increased police harassment against activists and community organizers. S.K. Hussan of No One Is Illegal, under severe house arrest conditions for G20 related charges, said "I think this criminalization, the bail conditions, the character assassination, are just a continuation of the ongoing violence the police carries out - particularly on poor people, particularly on migrants, particularly on people of colour." People without financial resources or middle-class sureties, are also facing a biased court system and are being denied bail and held for unreasonably lengths of time.

Farshad Azadian, a youth leader with the Esplanade Community Group, was arrested on July 23rd after observing police harassment of community youth. He was accused of obstructing justice although he was standing over 10 meters from the police. This follows on the detention of several members of the community group, including Azadian, during the G20 itself. Several members of the group were imprisoned in the Eastern Avenue detention centre after being kettled for hours by riot police outside the Novotel hotel, in their own neighbourhood.

Azadian said: "The police have gotten a lot more aggressive and even more willing to break their own laws in the post-G20 period, and I think that has to do with "ok"

that was given to them to smash skulls and arrest people randomly, and pen them up without rights. I think that has had a psychological impact on the police force. But, having said that, I could have gotten arrested at any time for observing police and ensuring that youths' rights don't get violated, and many have. I've been threatened with arrest numerous times, and other youth in my crew have been thrown into the back of cop cars for filming on the cell phone. So my arrest is definitely a question of the police's natural role in keeping the lower working class down, and psychologically intimidated. Me standing up to them was reason enough (in that case) to get me arrested, and regardless of the G20, it may have happened eventually. But the G20 I think made that kind of police behavior more likely to occur."

The latest arrest is Juan Pablo Lepore, an Argentinean documentary filmmaker, who was arrested during 'random questioning' in Montreal on September 2nd. He is currently at Metro West Detention Centre, and his friends are scrambling to find a surety. Nicolas Van Caloen, who was working on a documentary with Juan Pablo, said in a press release "The criminalization of Juan Pablo Lepore is proof that the waves of arrests following the G20 aim to discourage political engagement by people angered by our system's injustices." He noted in that case that people without significant financial

JULY 14: Police release photos of '10 Most Wanted' at press conference

JULY 21: Eleven people arrested at OCAP rally

JULY 21: Kelly Pflug-Back turns herself in after her photo is released to the media. Eventually released on \$80,000 bail.

JULY 23: Esplanade Community Group youth leader Farshad Azadian arrested for 'obstruction' while standing 10 m away from police

JULY 30: Alex Hundert and Leah Henderson told that speaking to the press is a violation of bail conditions

AUGUST 5: Indigenous rights activist Ryan Rainville arrested. Unable to post sufficient bail, Ryan remains in jail.

AUGUST 6: Police release more photos of G20 'most wanted'

resources, are being held without bail" The fact that accused have to pay a really large amount of money and have wealthy sureties to get conditional liberation is clearly showing that poor people are discriminated by the Canadian justice system."

Gary McCullough, who was arrested for driving near the G20 security zone with most of his possessions in his car, remains imprisoned since that weekend, probably because his elderly parents are unable to be

AUGUST 23: 300 people appear in Toronto court on G20-related charges, over 100 charges dropped

AUGUST 26: Community activist arrested after Hamilton Coalition Against the G20 event

SEPTEMBER 2: Juan Pablo Lepore, documentary filmmaker and independent journalist, arrested on G20-related charges in Montreal.

SEPTEMBER 3: indigenous solidarity activist Erik Lankin finally released from jail after 10 weeks in prison

SEPTEMBER 11: computer security expert Byron Sonne remains in jail since being arrested on June 22nd. Gary McCullough, arrested for driving near the G20 security zone with most of his possessions in his car, is also still in jail.

sureties for his bail. McCullough has a history of mental illness, and his lawyer told the *Star* "I don't see any basis for a determination that he is a danger to the public. I really believe that it's a prejudice against the mentally ill."

One Toronto activist, who declined to be named, said "This is a strategy, they are spreading out the arrests to increase fear and panic, it's so typical - but it won't work, it never works, it will only make us stronger."

Canada implicated in deaths of Afghan children

BY TIM GROVES AND GEORDIE DENT

Multiple reports of the Canadian military being involved in the deaths of Afghan children have been uncovered in WikiLeaks' diplomatic cables by the Toronto Media Co-op.

Two children were killed and another two hospitalized after playing with unexploded ordinance that was believed to be found in a Canadian firing range in Afghanistan, in February 2009, according to a cable leaked by the website WikiLeaks.

Canada had been test firing mortars and other ammunition as large as 120mm in the area. While the official report placed the blame on the children themselves, it still suggested Canada may have played a role in the children's death, while also indicating Afghan police may be to blame for the ordinance.

The official account differs drastically from those made by residents in the area shortly after the children were killed:

"A mortar round, fired from the direction of a Canadian forward operating base to the west of the village, landed among the children, who were on their way back from a local madrassa" read a story in Canadian Press [CP] from February 23rd 2009. Abdul Wahid, a resident of the area told CP. "This is disgusting, firing these kind of mortars on civilians".

Unexploded ordinance is a major problem in Afghanistan which according to some reports kills and injures about 60 people every month in Afghanistan. Almost half of those are children.

Another WikiLeaks cable detailed the killing of two teenagers, aged 14 and 16 years old by Canadians in October 2009, west of Kandahar.

Two Afghani teenaged boys were traveling towards a line of soldiers on a motorcycle at high speed. The soldiers of the 2nd Battalion of The Royal 22e Régiment were reported to be doing an independent offensive patrol.

The cable explains, "The motorcycle approached the cordon (line of soldiers) extremely fast and did not respond to verbal and visual warnings. As such, one aimed warning shot was fired. The motorcycle continued towards the cordon and when they were within 50m lethal shots were fired at the centre of mass," killing both boys.

It is not explained which visual signals were used to show two Afghani teenagers on a motorbike, more than 50 metres away, traveling at high speeds that they had to stop or slow down. Nor is it explained why the line of soldiers thought the two teenaged boys were a threat.



Afghan MP Malalai Joya speaks in Toronto. (Photo: Geordie Dent)



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WikiLeaks and the politics of whistleblowing

BY JUSTIN SAUNDERS

Ever since a U.S. army counterintelligence report identified WikiLeaks as a direct threat to the 'force protection interests' of the military – a euphemistic term for the United States' ability to militarily dominate when, where and against whom they choose – the organization has been in the Pentagon's crosshairs. For those of you who have been living under a rock, WikiLeaks runs a web portal dedicated to publishing government and corporate secrets online. It is, essentially, the new intermediary for potential whistleblowers and many of the 1.2+ million documents it has made public in its four year history have concerned various branches of the U.S. Government.

The propaganda war that is being played out between the Pentagon and WikiLeaks has become increasingly bitter in the last year and a half, first with the release of the notorious helicopter video and most recently in relation to the Afghan warlogs and the arrest and prosecution of Bradley Manning, an army intelligence analyst thought to be one of Wikileaks' primary sources. Although

Julian Assange, WikiLeaks co-founder and its most visible spokesperson, described the organization as primarily concerned with justice, it is the ideological acceptability of whistleblowing that is being fought over here.

However, the genie is out of the bottle in terms of the ability of state agencies to contain these secrets. If WikiLeaks were to disappear tomorrow, the data it has made public would remain (mirrored by an increasing number of webhosts around the world) and, more importantly, whistleblowers would still be able to publish information through alternate means. Online journalists, security researchers, tech activists and others interested in issues of privacy and security occupy an important position in this regard. Certainly, though, none of the other existing intermediaries (investigative journalists, media outlets, certain online forums dedicated to the purpose, 'sympathetic' hackers--- we all saw how well that worked out for Manning) have quite the brand recognition that WikiLeaks seems to have achieved - ironi-

cally, by virtue of the U.S. Government's attempts to discredit it.

WikiLeaks is now something of a misnomer. Originally, it was a wiki, with an open submission and publication process. John Young, the respected architect and activist behind Cryptome (a site that predates Wikileaks by a decade), was invited to be its public face. Young parted ways with WikiLeaks only a few weeks after, citing philosophical differences. Ironically, over time WikiLeaks itself has become much less transparent in its practices, ostensibly to protect the anonymity of its sources, and has published fewer and fewer documents – most of which have been classified United States military files. As Young has noted, this is a clear shift in policy and mission for the organization, which is to "expose oppressive regimes in Asia, the former Soviet bloc, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East". This, along with questions about the money trail (WikiLeaks claims to have received substantial amounts in donations but no one really knows how or to whom the

money has been allocated) and the character of Assange serve to undermine WikiLeaks' credibility at the same time as the organization has become synonymous with government accountability. This is, needless to say, an enormous problem with potentially serious implications for the future of whistleblowing.

Nevertheless, for all its faults (and there are many potential grounds on which to criticize the sustainability of the WikiLeaks model) WikiLeaks currently represents the desire of information to be free. On the other side institutions like the Pentagon and Executive branches of government represent the desire to control it. Between them lie a vast number of individuals who work within the global security apparatus, numbering in the millions in the United States alone. At stake are the loyalty and sense of ethics of these workers. But the excessive debate surrounding WikiLeaks' position as the primary vector for publishing secretive data may only serve to detract from its ability to do so. We should not let this happen.