






-  Solidarity
-  Creativity
-  Action

AW@L Statement on Targeted Policing at the Toronto G20 Convergence and the Continued Criminalization of Community Organizations.

September 15th 2010 – Kitchener-Waterloo

G20 Policing, Political Targeting, and Anarchy

The Toronto G20 and G8 summits of so-called “leaders” of the self-described free world were defiantly met by a massive convergence of people oriented towards social justice. Indigenous Nations and anti-poverty groups, migrant justice activists, anti-capitalists, environmentalists, community builders, disAbility rights advocates, radical feminists, anarchists, moms and grandmothers, animal liberation crusaders, maternal health advocates, civil libertarians, liberals, and some people from the right and a score of others from the entire spectrum of the ecological and social justice movements took the streets to share their love and rage. For another time on Turtle Island in 2010, a people’s convergence was met with scorn and repudiation from these uncaring leaders and with violence and violations from the massive security operation mobilized to keep us silent.

The punitive events around the G20 summit in June 2010 uncovered a new reality of the police state to many of our communities. 19 000 officers from the Toronto Police, RCMP, the Waterloo regional police and many other police forces swarmed the streets on foot, patrolled on dominated horseback and bicycle, and in unmarked vans and SUVs. Nearly every AW@L member was, at one point during the week of the Toronto convergence, illegally detained, illegally searched, or illegally arrested. 7 of our members have been taken away from our community by the state on political charges of criminal conspiracy, many others share these charges, and over 250 others have been charged by the state. The violence perpetrated by the police on demonstrators and others who happened to be in the area is thoroughly documented and is entirely inexcusableⁱ, yet the police are not held to account—no cops are being charged, and no federal inquiry is going to take place. The further violence and harassment which continues against AW@L members, friends, and strong allies as targets of the penal and legal systems are equally absurd and unjustified. It is clear that the state and its enforcers are considering this situation within a hysterical political narrative — the direction of police, the actions of the court, and the mainstream messaging that has been selected and presented do not suggest any other possibility.

We must take as a starting point the depth to which this situation is political. The state is targeting people involved in community and political organizing, people who have dedicated themselves towards social justice. Perhaps, then, they are threatened and scared of our ideas and our efficacy. People facing charges are being accused of conspiracy—thought crimes—and have been labelled by the tools of the state as masterminds of mayhem, and “violent alleged-anarchists.” If it was not clear before that the G20 security forces were policing thought, this should assist in stamping out any confusion. They are scared of community justice and cooperation, peace and anarchy, and they mock the justice system and molest the Canadian Charter while attempting to discredit, disempower, and imprison community members.

AW@L is not an organization that explicitly identifies as anarchistic. We like the ideologies of our members in the same fashion as our tactics – diverse: we have members whose views represent a wide range on the ideological spectrum of social justice. One tactic of the state and the police is to publically demonize our members who identify as anarchists, calling them violent people engaging in “non-political thuggery”. We understand anarchy as a political theory vastly different than the current dominant political system, different than

the one that puts an oppressive few in a privileged position. Anarchy puts at risk the privilege and power that these few hold over others; anarchy empowers the communities based not in domination and hierarchal systems, but autonomy and equality. The 19 000 security forces on the streets of Toronto were not there to “protect the public,” as was repeated ad nauseam and displayed through a corporate media blitzkrieg; but as shown from several pre-dawn terror raids on homes across the city, and the vicious aggressive actions against peaceful dissenters in the streets, they were there to protect the corporatocracy from ideological threats.

Shades of Fascism

The weekend of the G20 summit saw the largest mass arrest in Canadian history. This was clearly a disproportionate and unjust response. Fully armed police tried to justify the beatings, violent arrests, sexual assaults, and the blatant disregard of the Canadian charter by claiming they were chasing after a small “criminal element” that had “infiltrated” the demonstrations. It should be clear, however, that the criminal element present in Toronto during the week-long convergence against global capitalism, ongoing colonialism, and the G20, WAS the police and the G20 Summit delegates. The “leaders” of states cut support for vital social services in an agreement over “austerity measures”, and failed to undertake any serious discussion or action on assisting those most affected by this lopsided system of global capitalism. The state sent sociopaths to infiltrate community organizations, AW@L included, more than a year ahead of the G20 summit. In Toronto, non-uniformed police snatch squads emerged from unmarked vehicles and viciously arrested or harassed demonstrators and other civilians with impunity – broken arms, smashed skulls and other lacerations were often the result. If we look to our history books as we have oft-been told to do, these snatch squads invoke Pinochet, this infiltration reminds us of Cointelpro.

Police violence is resisted daily by poor and migrant communities and all Indigenous Nations of Turtle Island, including on the illegally occupied Grand River territory of the Haudenosaunee People, where this statement has been created. Police repression of culture or political dissent is also found in racially profiled areas of North American cities and states, it is found in Honduras, El Salvador, Haiti, Afghanistan, Palestine, and other targets of the neo-colonial ravages of neoliberal economies. This is the political function of the police; they maintain the power imbalances that have defined our colonial society for its settlers over its entire history. The G20 summit’s policing merely brought this reality to those whose privilege normally shields them from such targeting, and directed massive efforts against politically involved youth. Between the daily illegal actions of the police and their equally unreasonable actions at the G20, we can see what the police are actually protecting, and the violence they require to do so.

We refuse to accept this violence as inevitable throughout our lives. We must challenge the assumptions and circumstances that create and sustain such a system. One of these assumptions is that the police need the latest weapons and the most expensive and high tech equipment. While we cannot take back all the new population control training the local, provincial, and federal police forces received in the lead-up to the G20 or the other militarized mega-event of the year—the olympics--we can demand a return of their new weaponry and a complete disarming of all police who took part in the brutality of the of the G20, and those who enable these illegal acts through not speaking out when their conscience pleaded to do so. To counter an increasing level of militarization of the police and our streets, we can unite to refuse their culture of fearⁱⁱ.

The demonstrations against the G20 summit embraced a diversity of tactics. A wide spectrum of tactics and approaches were represented; what was shown and conveyed through corporate media is both limited and polarised. Corporate media portrayals have tried to equate a diversity of tactics with militancy—this is a blatant misrepresentation and misunderstanding. The word “diversity” itself should make clear that a plurality of approaches can be applied side by side and accommodated. A diversity of tactics makes space for militancy, and

for pacifism, and for everything in between and beside. It allows people to respond to injustices as is necessary; affected communities can decide what an appropriate response is. All chosen tactics are political actions if performed as such, and all actions undertaken around the G20 were undertaken in such a political context. Refer to AW@L's statement on Diversity of Tactics for a deeper analysis of this topicⁱⁱⁱ.

It is highly errant to blame militant direct action for police violence being wrought upon demonstrators on June 26 2010. The build-up of the security state will always require a justification after the fact, but its proliferation is always premeditated. The police were overwhelmed by the efficacy and united strength of the break-off march and the black bloc, and the state decided that the "non-violent" crowd also was to be punished for this success. It is equally absurd to blame to black bloc for the mainstream media ignoring the rest of the Saturday's actions. The media ignored much of the convergence for the entire week; only confrontations with police made the corporate-news highlight reel. The corporate media will never broadcast that which opposes corporatocracy, and the police will always act to protect the state while ensuring that the real messages are buried. Remember the corporate media replayed the blazing cruisers yet gave no context to mounted police running over peaceful demonstrators in Queen's Park. Remember that the police beat singing demonstrators sitting in circles in the protest pen. This degree of police repression is being used not just because their property is being attacked, but because those building alternative societies are proving effective.

We are Winning

In the past few years we have been accumulating victories through direct action, and our communities have become stronger. Our strength is seen and realized in the outpouring of community support and solidarity. Our effectiveness is seen in these victories and by the targeting and harassment aimed towards us by the state and its cruel actors.

It has become clear to many that the legal and political persecution undertaken against AW@L and its members by the state is extra-legal punishment for our collaboration in victories and actions at Site 41, the Hanlon Creek Watershed Complex, Grassy Narrows, Kahnstato, and the Edwards St landfill. The state does not like that AW@L demanded an end of Canadian support for the Israeli occupation of Palestine. That we demand the demilitarization of public educational facilities has challenged and angered many with political influence. They do not like that we vocally and publically exposed and opposed the Security and Prosperity Partnership and continue to work against neoliberal austerity. Perhaps Harper, Kenney, Prentice and other racist politicians were personally offended when we joined the demand for the repatriation of the illegally exiled and knowingly tortured Abousfian Abdelrazik, and that we march behind No One Is Illegal on May Day. We are targeted because AW@L has taken action with the international movement against the ecocidal industrial mega-project in the ancient tar sands under the Boreal forest in the Peace and Athabasca watersheds. The government and its systems of punishment and control target AW@L and our allies because we stand in solidarity with our Indigenous hosts from Six Nations and that we joined the call from Coast Salish territories for an anti-colonial convergence against the land-destroying Olympic machine.

They are the corporations, they are the state. They seek to protect their power and privilege at the expense of everyone and everything else. They use a wide range of tactics, too; they use the highly visible—the police and their tear gas, batons, and bullets—and the hidden attacks—the portrayal of a divided movement of "good" and "bad" protesters, the labels of "terrorists" and "thugs", the equation of "anarchy" and "violence" (meaning militancy, still a false portrayal)—in this way they try to fracture and incapacitate our movement to protect their fortress from the real threat of a united struggle.

But we will not allow them to have that victory. We will not be defeated by these attacks; our communities and our ideas are stronger than their batons, sound cannons, and propaganda. To be sure, one tactic

or approach on our part cannot effectively combat all of their attacks. But as a united movement, we can fight back and come out on top. We can realise the strength of a diversity of tactics, of a bigger, stronger movement, through real solidarity. This means supporting each others' work towards a more just society, making space for different tactics than those we might ourselves employ. Every action, every attack is valuable, and we can add to that impact through solidarity. The most resilient natural systems are those that are highly diverse, and it is false and highly anthropogenic to assume that human systems, especially systems and communities of resistance, would be any different.

Solidarity extends to directly supporting our allies who are imprisoned for their political engagement. These people are community organisers, not “thugs”. They are actively engaged in working for justice—for social justice, ecological justice, economic justice, gender justice. The “justice system” in which our comrades are being persecuted is a farce. We must unite in support of our imprisoned and politically targeted allies, our friends, our lovers, our teachers, and our students. This situation presents an opportunity for communities to come together and grow stronger, and to cross-pollinate. AW@L unites in solidarity with the prisoners of the G20 and all political and economic prisoners. We call for your support in this struggle, as it is a shared struggle.

Express your dissent - always,

AW@L (Social and Ecological Justice – Haudenosaunee Territory/Grand River Watershed)

AW@L's demands:

1. Stop the political targeting of community organizers, organizations, and anarchists.
2. Release the prisoners of the G20 and drop all charges that are related to G20 convergence organizing and demonstrations.
3. Have those responsible for the G20 shitshow held to account in our communities. This includes not only the police officers who violated legal and Charter rights, but also those who ordered them to do so. This includes Harper, McGuinty, Miller, and Bill Blair.
4. Have all new weapons that were acquired for G20 “security” returned and put all funds towards the families of those who have experienced the most brutal of police actions. This includes the families of Junior Manon, Robert Dziekanski, Fredy Villanueva, Dudley George, and others who have had family members murdered by racist, sexist, ableist, and homophobic police forces.
5. Disarm the police. We cannot have civilized contact with a gang of heavily armed thugs who have repeatedly shown their impunity with regard to public safety and charter rights.
6. Have Canada Sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and take action to implement its spirit—including the establishment of truth and reconciliation commissions, and honest attempts at sovereignty and lands claims negotiations.

ⁱ <http://www.c4pa.ca>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.peaceculture.org/drupal/cultureoffear>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.peaceculture.org/drupal/DoT>