



PEN Canada concerned by alleged police actions during G20 summit

TORONTO: July 4, 2010 — PEN Canada is extremely concerned about the alleged breach of the rights of journalists attempting to cover protests surrounding the G20 meetings in Toronto, and joins other organizations in calling for an independent inquiry into reported police actions, including their detaining and assaulting numerous journalists.

The image of one female independent journalist speaking on television of how when in custody she was threatened with rape is a powerful one.

The Canadian Journalists for Free Expression noted that:

- o *CTV News Channel* producer Farzad Fatholahzadeh was detained;
- o Freelance journalist Jesse Rosenfeld was beaten and arrested;
- o *National Post* intern Liem Vu, and Lisan Jutras, a *Globe and Mail* journalist, were among those detained for four hours at Queen and Spadina;
- o *National Post* photographers Brett Gundlock and Colin O'Connor were arrested and charged;
- o *Real News* journalist Jesse Freeston was punched in the face by a police officer;
- o *Torontoist* journalist Wyndham Bettencourt-McCarthy was struck by a police officer with a baton;
- o Video journalist Brandon Jourdan was thrown to the ground and beaten by police.

“When journalists are detained or otherwise prevented from doing their jobs, we cannot turn away from the fact that their constitutional right to free expression has been denied,” said PEN Canada President Ellen Seligman.

The constitution of Canada guarantees freedom of expression. But this guarantee is not protected if journalists are prevented from gathering information, or if they are deprived of the right to disseminate this information to the public who should receive it. This means that the police, while accommodating their efforts to maintain the peace, must also ensure the protection of journalists doing their jobs. In Toronto, on the weekend of June 26-27, free expression was not protected.

Only an independent commission can determine how these extremely distressing breaches occurred, and make recommendations that will have the authority to ensure that civil servants do not again ignore the public interest and the right to free expression. PEN Canada believes

that the proposed internal investigation, to be conducted by the government and the police themselves, is insufficient to address this crisis in public confidence. We therefore strongly urge that an independent Commission of Inquiry be set up.

PEN Canada is the Canadian Centre of PEN International, the oldest freedom of expression organization in the world.

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