



PHOTO BY ETHAN EISENBERG

G20 update

Watchdog Special Investigations Unit probes five complaints of G20 police violence

BY JOSH HUME

As the last of the G20 detainees await release on bail (14 of the 16 still in jail were expected in court Wednesday, July 7), police continue to review hours of footage taken on the streets during the summit. More charges are expected.

So far, 263 people face G20-related charges. According to Toronto police Constable Wendy Drummond, 1,105 arrests were made during the summit, not including those detained in overnight raids or G20-related arrests made since then.

“There still are people who have yet to be identified, and we do have images that are continually being sent to us,” Drummond says.

Among those scooped up, 714 were detained and then released, or arrested for breach of peace and later freed without charge. According to Drummond, 113 were not booked at all.

Movement Defence Committee lawyer Ryan White says bogus conditions were often attached to the release of those charged with breach of peace, including that they not attend any more G20 protests.

Says White, "Police were demobilizing opposition to the G20 by basically arresting as many people as possible, tossing them in some terrible jail off in the east end of town and hoping that by the time they emerged 24 hours later things would have calmed down."

White expects that many of the remaining charges will be dropped.

"One reason for the mass arrests, I'm sure, is to gather intelligence on legitimate movements of dissent," he says. "You arrest everyone and you suddenly get to search them and fingerprint them, and you certainly get to identify them."

Meanwhile, the Toronto Police Services Board on Tuesday took steps to set up a review of police actions during the G20. This may shed light on the jurisdictional tangles that arose during summit security and the role Toronto police played in decision-making.

That review is expected to take about 12 weeks to complete.

Nathalie Des Rosiers of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) calls the review "an important step in the public knowing what has happened," and says her organization is willing to intervene to ensure the investigation is "comprehensive, independent and credible."

Des Rosiers says a CCLA class action suit against police is in the works, along with a number of individual lawsuits.

Charges against police may be piling up through other channels as well.

The Special Investigations Unit, the civilian watchdog that investigates violent incidents involving police, is probing at least five cases of serious injury to civilians during the G20.

Meanwhile, the Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD), which deals more generally with police misconduct, has seen a jump in complaints.

While the OIPRD could not isolate specifically G20-related complaints, the office received 164 between June 27 and July 3, the days immediately following the G20, about double the number received in a typical week.

Among these were complaints filed last week by civil rights lawyer Julian Falconer on behalf of Jesse Rosenfeld, Amy Miller, Daniel McIsaac and Lisa Walter – the so-called "Free Press 4" of independent journalists detained during the summit.

“Police officers were allowed to essentially run amok because they were embarrassed on Saturday,” says Falconer, who questions how police were able to enact “War Measures Act-like powers. It is simply beyond any legal limits I can fathom.”