

G20 Arrestee Solidarity Campaign Update

This is an update on what has happened in the proceedings against the G20 accused, the defence campaign and related issues.

This update covers three court dates, the public black listing of the G20 arrestees as “excluded persons” before the APEC protests in September, the APEC arrestees, the refusal of bail and ongoing imprisonment of Akin Sari in Melbourne Remand Centre, Akin Sari’s guilty plea, the arrest of environmental, peace and Maori sovereignty activists on terror charges in New Zealand and an overview of upcoming court dates and campaign priorities.

Meetings are now held monthly on the second Friday of every month, ie: 11th January, 8 February.

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More G20 arrests

On 15 November, Gabriel Shanks from New Zealand was arrested at Sydney airport while changing to a flight to Europe. He was charged with riot in relation to events that took place on the day of the protests against the G20. He was held in custody over the weekend before being released on \$10 000 surety, with the condition that he remain in Melbourne until his trial.

On 10 December, a 37 year old man was arrested in Brisbane and charged with riot in relation to events that took place on the day at the protests against the G20. He was not taken into custody but made his own way to Melbourne to appear in court on December 14.

These arrests indicate that resources are still being directed towards identifying and charging people who protested the G20.

Report back from court appearances

Court Date 1 – 31 August: Committal Hearing

Everybody was remanded on current bail conditions until the contest hearing in February 08. Our brother & comrade Akin Sari did not turn up to court and the Judge received a letter from him explaining his reasons. While arrestees were in the courtroom our

supporters holding a solidarity rally outside were subject to Police brutality.
<http://indymedia.org.nz/newswire/display/73587/index.php>”

Police violently grabbed and detained a man who, in preparation for entering the court building was transferring his pocket knife and nail clippers into the backpack of another person who would remain outside. This was inaccurately reported as the arrest of a ‘protester with a knife’. <http://sydney.indymedia.org.au/story/melbourne-police-provoke-arrests-g20-solidarity-court-protest>

This unnecessary arrest by police at the solidarity rally outside court on the 31 August-timed directly in the lead up to APEC- appeared to have been motivated by a need to create the impression of threat. There was an attempt to frame the G20 protesters as a threat in order to provide a justification for the APEC laws and overblown security budget.

This police action and media targeting of particular political groups and networks also appeared to have been designed to scare activists away from protesting APEC - to crush dissent in general. As one of the arrestees stated at the time “it wont work we are committed, we are unified, the state, the pigs and their puppets can never break our solidarity.”

During this Victorian court hearing all arrestees were also handed a letter from the NSW Police Commissioners stating that they had been listed as 'excluded persons' for the APEC period. More on this below.

Court Date 2 - 11 October: Committal Hearing continued

This was the continuation of the last hearing (the committal hearing). Most of the discussion centred around which witnesses would be called at the contest hearing (scheduled in Feb 2008). At the contest hearing the defence has the chance to cross-examine some of the prosecution witnesses. The defence lawyers listed the witnesses they intended to call, and the prosecution responded, either approving or contesting those witnesses. The ability of the defence to call all witnesses was disputed in some cases. Generally most of these issues were resolved by consensus before this court date. There were discussions about a few witnesses which were all resolved, and the judge generally favoured the defences' right to call the witnesses that they had requested. There were also a few bail variations (people travelling overseas or interstate temporarily), these were not opposed or contentious.

Court Date 3 – 4 December: Application for summary jurisdiction

The Magistrate rejected an application by 20 of the G20 defendants to have their cases heard in the Magistrates Court, rather than the higher County Court. Their lawyers had argued that it would take less time and money to hear the cases in the Magistrates court, and that there was little reason besides a political motivation to move to County Court.

The magistrate rejected this application, and held that all the charges must be heard in the County court. They will join 5 other defendants in County Court, and it is likely that the trial will not happen until 2009. Having their cases heard in County Court also means that they could face higher penalties if they are found guilty.

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/g20-accused-to-face-county-court/2007/12/05/1196812806428.html>

Akin Sari

Akin Sari did not appear in court on the 31 August, and thereby breached his bail conditions. A warrant was issued for his arrest.

Akin fully bore the brunt of a joint police and corporate media campaign against him, making it impossible for him to live or find employment in Melbourne. The ongoing vilification of Akin in the media, was renewed on 29 July when *Herald Sun* journalist Liam Houlihan described him (again) in racist, sensationalist and defamatory ways as a “a schizophrenic Rastafarian with a bipolar disorder.”

<http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,22149853-2862,00.html>).

Akin was arrested for breaching bail in Sydney (where a friend had offered him a place to live and a job) on September 6 and extradited to Victoria to the Melbourne Remand Centre. OGASN was able to put up \$10,000 bail but bail was refused on the 10 September the basis that Akin posed an unacceptable flight risk. Akin had previously written and not retracted a letter to the court that explained his reasons for skipping bail and stated that he refused to accept the authority of the court. The magistrate cited this letter as the reason for refusing bail.

In a continuation of defamatory and fact-free journalism *The Age* reported that Akin made an escape attempt at this bail hearing. Witnesses in the court report that this was completely fabricated and that what actually happened was that Akin had pushed a bible off a table in disgust at the decision to deny bail. At a later court date (11 October) the judge noted that *The Age* article which described Akin as attempting to flee the court at his bail hearing did not accurately represent her view of events, thus putting it on the record that this was complete media misrepresentation.

On the 18 October Akin pleaded guilty to two counts of assault, two counts of riot, theft and criminal damage. He was remanded in jail to appear in court of the 4 February 2008. By the 4th February Akin will have been imprisoned for 5 months not including the time he spent in custody after his initial arrest.

You are encouraged to write letters of support or to send a solidarity postcard to:

Akin Sari
Melbourne Remand Centre,
PO Box
St Albans

The APEC Excluded Persons list

While in court on 31 August all the G20 arrestees received a letter from the New South Wales Police Commissioner informing them that they were on the “Excluded persons list” for the APEC period. They were told that they were forbidden from entering certain zones in Sydney, including the airport and much of the CBD, and that if they entered the ‘declared areas’ they would be detained and removed.

The APEC powers already enabled the police to remove any person from these areas for any reason, which means that the blacklist was functionally superfluous. The list functioned purely as exercise in publicity and intimidation.

Defence lawyers sought and gained a suppression order to prevent the media reporting on the exclusion orders, on the grounds that they would prejudice opinion against the arrestees. You didn’t have to be found ‘guilty’ of anything to be named on the list and there was no right of appeal about being included, or any way of finding out on what grounds you were being included on the list. Despite this, the names and photos of many of those on the blacklist were published in the *Daily Telegraph* in Sydney.

The blacklist appeared to be flamboyant sensationalist overkill on the part of the NSW Police for one further reason. The majority of the G20 Arrestees live in Victoria and would have had to have their bail conditions changed to leave the state. The stated purpose for the inclusion of the G20 arrestees on the excluded persons was to prevent them from participating in the APEC demonstrations – this aim had already been achieved by the bail conditions.

The effect of including the G20 arrestees on this widely publicised black list was that the arrestees were used in the media as the ‘bogey men and women’ of ‘violent protest’. The supposed threat posed by the G20 accused was bandied around as an excuse and justification for the billion dollar security regime set up to ‘protect’ the APEC delegates from terrorism and ‘violent protest.’

Paddy Gibson, a Sydney anti-war activist and member of Solidarity and the Stop Bush Coalition, was also placed on the list on the 31st of August. He and other Sydney-based excluded declared their intention to defy the ban. Paddy stated, "this order is totally unjustified and aimed at intimidating people against protesting. The Stop Bush Coalition is determined to march into the APEC security area and I will march with them. There is a real urgency to get out on the street in opposition to what the Howard government is doing in Iraq. There is no way I won't be at this demonstration. It's not that I don't care [about the legal consequences] but I think there's a political necessity."

[“‘Excluded’ protester to march against APEC”, www.theage.com.au/news/national/a-political-necessity/2007/08/31/1188067353653.html]

A few days after the first announcement, ten more excluded person letters were delivered

to anarchists associated with Flare in the Void and Mutiny. Flare in the Void was a pre-APEC convergence, which had received sensationalist media coverage when the conference reader, which reprinted widely circulated information on protest safety and direct action, was described as a 'riot training manual.' ['Rioters Plot to target Bush', *Daily Telegraph*, September 3 2007, <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,22349895-2,00.html>] Mutiny had been widely (and incorrectly) named in the media as the group 'partly responsible for violence at last year's G20 protests' [*The Australian*, August 30, 2007, p5].

A number of environmental activists were also added to the 'excluded persons list' after being arrested for locking on at the Carrington Coal loading Terminal in Newcastle, the world's largest coal port, to protest the lack of action on climate change by world leaders gathered at the APEC. Their bail conditions included a prohibition from attending any APEC-related political meetings. Many of these bail conditions were subsequently successfully challenged.

On the day of the large Stop Bush anti-APEC rally many of those on the excluded list marched into the rally as a bloc with members of the Firefighters Union and Melbourne-based AC/DC (Alliance for Civil Disobedience Coordination). The rally as a whole was prevented from entering the exclusion zone by the massive police presence.

APEC arrests and over policing:

Over 5000 attended the protests in Sydney against APEC, its policies and the police lockdown of the city. According to police, 18 people were arrested at the rally. One man was arrested for throwing darts at police during the march and remains in custody.

After the rally was over a group of people were having a meeting in the park when the police (wrongly) said that two of the 'excluded people' were within a prohibited zone. Other people intervened when they tried to detain them, and were attacked by police. Several of them were arrested on charges such as assaulting police. They were denied bail for the remaining days of the APEC period but were later released.

Six women and 11 men were arrested.

Charge details are:

- * A 29-year-old Paddington woman charged with resist police. She was granted bail to appear in the Downing Centre Local Court on October 11;
- * A 25-year-old Woolloomooloo man charged with assault;
- * A man charged with assault police, throw missile;
- * A 21-year-old Epping man charged with offensive conduct. He was granted bail to appear in the Downing Centre Local Court on October 11;
- * A 21-year-old man charged with offensive behaviour. He was granted bail to appear in the Downing Centre Local Court on October 11;
- * A Hamilton South man charged with assault, resist police, refuse search;
- * A 41-year-old man charged with hinder police. He has been granted

bail to October 11;

- * A 31-year-old Lidcombe woman charged with breach a secure area;
- * A 31-year-old woman from Coburg North in Victoria charged with assault police, resist arrest and affray;
- * A 20-year-old woman charged with hinder police;
- * A 21-year-old Redfern woman charged with hinder police;
- * A 25-year-old Camperdown woman charged with hinder police;
- * A 54-year-old Ashfield man charged with hinder police;
- * A 37-year-old Balmain man charged with assault police;
- * A 35-year-old man from Holder in the ACT charged with offensive language and resist arrest;
- * A 25-year-old man charged with hinder police and offensive language;
- * A 28-year-old Lilyfield man charged with resist arrest and affray.

Some of the people arrested at APEC are appearing in court in Sydney on 20 December. A rally has been called for outside Downing Centre Local Court from 8.30am. They are still looking for witnesses to their arrests: anyone with footage or who saw it should contact Daniella on 0404 189 272 or daniellaolea@hotmail.com.

OGASN has committed to providing and travel and legal funds to APEC arrestees on a request basis.

In other APEC related over-policing news, Victorian buses were stopped and searched at the Victorian/NSW border. They were detained on the side of the road for several hour but no charges were laid.

<http://www.socialistpartyaustralia.org/archives/2007/09/10/apec-talk-shop-achieves-nothing/>

NZ activists arrested under terror laws

Activists in Aetearoa were targeted by state repression with dawn raids arrests over blown terror charges, denial of bail, media vilification and in the case of the Tuhoë the military invasion of a community. A summary of this attack on environmental, anarchist and Maori activists is included below. For more info go to:

<http://www.civilrightsdefence.org.nz>

On the 14 October New Zealand police raided a Maori community, anarchist social centres in Auckland and Wellington and various private houses across New Zealand. Firearms charges have been laid but the mainstream NZ press has made a series of wild accusations that include weapons training camps and that a napalm bomb had been found.

In addition to the arrests, at least 60 people were approached by the police and requested to answer questions and have their houses searched, in many cases police lacked warrants to authorise these actions. An environmental activist in Wellington reported that police came to his door without a warrant seeking to search his house and question him but they were rightly turned away.

More than 300 police were involved in the operation. The early morning raids were carried out at several addresses including the 'A Space Inside' anarchist social centre in Auckland and an activist community centre called 128 in Wellington.

The raids came after months of work by anti-terror police, with evidence gathered from hundreds of hours of recordings from bugged conversations, video surveillance, and tapped mobile phone calls and text messages. Police Commissioner Howard Broad alleged that those arrested had used firearms and other weapons at military-style training camps.

Police had sought to have charges laid under the Terrorism Suppression Act, but on November 8th, the Solicitor-General, announced he would not give permission for TSA charges to be laid due to insufficient evidence. With these changed circumstances, those of the arrested who had been denied bail were granted bail. 12 people still face firearms charges.

For a detailed report: <http://anarchia.wordpress.com/2007/12/10/state-repression-in-aotearoa-new-zealand/>

For updates: <http://www.indymedia.org.nz>
<http://www.conscious.maori.nz/>

Get involved:

The G20 court cases are likely to extend well into 2009, with one more significant stage in the legal process before arrestees are tried. To make a donation to the support fund or to find out more, contact afterg20@gmail.com.

Next court date: 18 February, County Court, Williams Street, Melbourne.

Campaign contact details and publications:
<http://www.afterg20.org/>

For a copy of a great zine called "It's not ok to pretend everything's alright" by a G20 arrestee try sending bribes to:
PO Box 4, Enmore NSW 2042

For arrestee accounts, discussion and more go to:
<http://arushandapush.blogsome.com>

To write to the arrestee who is being held in the Melbourne remand centre write to: Akin Sari, Melbourne Remand Centre, PO box 500 St Albans VIC AUS 3021.

For links to media and an overview of pre-APEC and 31 August court date events see:
<http://indymedia.org.nz/newswire/display/73587/index.php>

