



PRESS RELEASE

September 9, 2020

Obstruction and criminalization of free press by Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) violates our fundamental rights

OHSWEKEN - Since July 19, 2020 a peaceful group of Haudenosaunee land defenders and Six Nations community members began the reclamation of a part of their territory, renaming it 1492 Land Back Lane.

Azaadi Now released a feature episode on 1492 Land Back Lane on Aug. 27. We are an independent media outlet that is dedicated to creating space for Indigenous voices, and reporting on Indigenous issues by Indigenous people. Our independent media focuses on educating our community about the conditions of Indigenous relatives and kin globally.

On early Saturday Sept. 5th, Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) visited the home of one of our core production team members (who was not there at the time), without any prior communication or notice. We acquired legal counsel, and learnt through our counsel that an arrest warrant has been issued for this team member. On Wednesday Sept. 9 morning, our team member turned themselves in, was arrested, charged, and released at OPP's Cayuga Police detachment. Since Aug. 5th, 26 individuals have been charged in relation to the 1492 Land Back Lane reclamation, 15 of these have been within the last week, including our team member.

The OPP has issued a criminal charge of 'mischief' and failure to comply with the court injunction order (which prohibits anyone from visiting the land back camp) against our team member. This charge and the order has the effect of preventing our team member from reporting on developments at 1492 Land Back Lane.

Criminalization of free press is a dangerous route to go for any democracy. Unfortunately, this is the direction Canada has chosen. Canada has a pattern of policing-units (RCMP, OPP) preventing journalists from covering Indigenous land defense stories. This pattern is similar to many settler-colonial fascist states across the globe, like India in relation to Kashmir. The trend continues here in Canada with the recent arrests of One Dish, One Mic's Haudenosaunee co-host Karl Dockstader and recently, *Azaadi Now's* production team member. This pattern of obstruction and criminalization of free press violates Canada's constitutional commitments to freedom of expression guaranteed under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The criminalization and genocidal removal of Indigenous land defenders from their own territories by settler colonial states is another pattern we see globally. Such actions violate Indigenous peoples rights, as set out under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, to which Canada is a signatory.

We ask our friends and supporters to challenge these rights violations. Please contact your elected representatives and ask them to denounce the criminalization of media and Indigenous land defenders, and to drop the charges.

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Kashmir Gulposh is a non-profit organization dedicated to peace, justice, and prosperity in Kashmir region.

Azaadi Now is Kashmir Gulposh's independent media platform that covers current affairs in Kashmir and

Indigenous resurgence globally.

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