

# ANARCHISTS VS PROTESTERS

## THE CRIMINALIZATION OF DISSENT

**Warning  
Research in  
Progress**

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### Overview

Anarchism is a term originating from the Greek term 'Anarkos' meaning 'without ruler'. As its fundamental-and arguably, ONLY-tenet, it espouses the elimination of the state -the ruler- as a central, governing force in the lives of humans.

This orientation toward self-governance is predicated on numerous abuses conducted by states against human beings, both within and outside the official purview of the state (citizens and non-citizens). Furthermore, Anarchist theory holds that the state generally fails to serve the needs of the vast majority of the people it claims to serve, prioritizing the needs of a select constellation of elite power-holders over those of the general populace. Examples of this include the proliferation of state, corporate, and environmental crime in the global community.

Common expressions of Anarchism include collective houses and societies, peaceful resistance against perceived instances of state aggression, and denial of state authority (essentially, internal secession).

Contrary to popular conceptions of Anarchism, it does not necessarily imply violence, chaos, or the disintegration of society. Rather, it implies the restructuring of society with an eye to the prioritization of 'lower-order,' personal relationships over impersonal economic or nationalist bonds.

### Surveillance

Over the past decade, surveillance has increased and become more extreme in Canada. Surveillance has gone from CCTV cameras and a strong police presence at protests to infiltration methods such as the use of 'agent provocateurs' and the state deployment of 'Black Bloc' tactics.

Policing at protests is no longer about reactive policing and crowd control. Surveillance of protests is not limited to the duration of the event; state agents engage in surveillance both prior and after events which is an alarming infringement of one's privacy rights. It seems these invasive surveillance methods disproportionately target state labelled anarchist groups.

When it comes to surveillance and police infiltration, there is evidence to suggest police agencies have developed a criteria of distinction between anarchists and protesters.

Case examples include Heart Attack at Vancouver 2010 Olympics and the G8 & G20 Summits that took place in Toronto of 2010.

### Ideological Control

The ideological division between protesters and anarchists, created by the state, serves to break collectivity and solidarity among advocacy groups and anarchists; in this way, the state protects the status quo and guards Canadian society against the infiltration of anarchist values.

The state radicalizes and criminalizes anarchist groups as a means of constructing anarchists as illegitimate advocates. The state controlled mainstream media frequently produces propaganda that portrays anarchists as violent criminals and radicals. A local example of the demonization of anarchist groups occurred at the 2011 Vancouver Stanley Cup Riot, whereby the Vancouver police quickly released statements to the media attributing the riots to "criminals and anarchists." We now know these statements are untrue, yet the state refuses to recognize its accusations as no more than a method of ideological control which uses anarchists as scapegoats. The coupling of "criminals and anarchists" by the state functions to induce public fear against anarchist groups while distorting the fundamental beliefs of which anarchism is built.

### Attacks

In the eyes of the police, the lines that distinguish protesters and anarchists can be blurred and in various cases the two groups are targeted and attacked by state agents in an indiscriminate manner. For example at the G20 Summit, more than 1,100 arrests were made due to punitive police practices. Such practices included arbitrary search and seizure, pre-emptive arrests, and "kettling," a method used by police to trap large crowds of protesters before arresting them as a means of breaking up protests and preventing further criminal activity. The aggressive police response during the G20 Summit reflects the typical response to anarchist groups. To illustrate the punitive treatment of anarchists by the state, we can examine the raid of Anarchist Milieux in Quebec. In the Anarchist Milieux raid, officers arrested occupants, without warrants, who they believed belonged to an anarchist group. The arbitrary treatment of protesters and lack of due process demonstrates the perceived division of protesters and anarchists, in the eyes of the police, is not necessarily clear cut.

### Activities

According to police training documentation which came to light following the G20, there is a notable distinction in the state characterization of 'Anarchists' and 'Protesters'. This divide has little to do with the ideological affiliation of the group in question, and more to do with the types of activities engaged in:

Protesters tend to be characterized by their involvement in generally nonthreatening 'symbolic action' style protests, which have a high degree of visibility, but pose little threat to the operation of state and corporate activities.

In contrast, individuals engaged in civil disobedience and/or some forms of direct action (smashing windows, destroying cop cars, and resisting police attempts to break up protests) tend to be labelled as anarchists.

Overall, the labeling of, and differential response to so-called anarchists by the state reflects less a recognizance of an ideological stance than it does an attempt to demonize protesters who go beyond 'traditional' and ultimately nonthreatening forms of dissent.

### Punishments

It is not uncommon for Canadian anarchists to be specifically traced and punished by police simply for affiliating themselves with anarchism, regardless of involvement or non-involvement in direct action.

Earlier this year in Vancouver, local police executed an anti-graffiti warrant at a residence of known anarchists. The warrant allowed for residents' phones to be taken and searched. When only one of the five residents was arrested for charges relating to graffiti, it was evident the warrant was an attempt to gather information on the anarchist group.

In addition, individuals perceived to be anarchist ringleaders were arrested prior to the G20 Summit on charges of conspiracy in an attempt to prevent them from attending any protests. Also at the G20, Michael Puddy, a passerby wearing black clothing and sporting a mohawk, was arrested for obstructing police, but the arresting officer later admitted that he did not see Puddy obstruct anyone. Police targeted and arrested Puddy for appearing to be an anarchist.



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