

*In the Spirit
of The Bill
of Rights...*

FREE SPEECH AND ASSEMBLY

Must Not Be Denied in Chicago!

To: Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy, and Janet Napolitano, Secretary of Homeland Security

We the undersigned wish to express our deep concern regarding attempts by the City of Chicago to suppress peaceful protests during the May 2012 NATO and G8 summit meetings. Specifically Sunday, May 20, is the date when sizable numbers are expected to gather in Chicago to exercise their democratic rights under the U.S. Constitution.

Following an extraordinary – possibly unprecedented – delay of 20 weeks in responding to a request for written permits for a demonstration at Daley Plaza (118 N. Clark St.) on this date, a denial was received. While we have subsequently been notified by the Chicago Public Building Commission that permits* will be granted for Daley Plaza to still unspecified groups, the vague language of this response again raises serious questions as to the City's intentions and especially so since our original application was filed the day immediately following the public announcement of the NATO/G8 meetings – almost six months ago. This is, frankly, not acceptable.

Rather than repeat the City's past policies – which include the eviction of the celebrated Occupy Chicago encampment with numerous arrests – we would like the City to reverse course, welcome those attending protest events, and set a world standard for accountability, acceptance and respect for our guaranteed rights.

We greatly regret early positions reported in the Chicago Tribune on October 23, 2011 that the harsh crackdown on Occupy Chicago – in a clear violation of the constitutional right to free speech and peaceful assembly – was some sort of precedent for the City's planned behavior next May.

Designating the NATO/G8 summits as a National Special Security Event (NSSE) does

not give city and federal authorities the right to suspend the U.S. Constitution. The First Amendment clearly protects the right to free speech and assembly.

Efforts to correct these wrongs should begin immediately by allowing Occupy Chicago to camp in a public area, followed by issuing the permits in a timely manner that will ensure an orderly, peaceful, family-friendly experience for the City of Chicago next May during the meetings of NATO and the G8.

In that spirit, we petition you to: cease and desist from all actions that limit the constitutional rights of protesters to free speech and assembly; grant the Coalition Against NATO/G8 War and Poverty Agenda, without delay, permits for rallies and marches within sight and sound of the forthcoming summits; and cease making veiled threats of harsh treatment and arrest of those who are planning protests and those who are considering participation.

We live in troubled times where fundamental incursions on the right to assemble and peacefully protest in Chicago are coupled with ominous threats to our constitutional rights in general. Perhaps the most disturbing is the National Defense Authorization Act, approved by Congress on Dec. 15, that grants the government the right to conduct secret

and indefinite detentions without recourse to counsel and without charges presented in a court of law.

We look forward to a positive and specific response to this appeal. No one will benefit more than the City of Chicago itself.

Once again, the whole world will be watching. * **Important update:** Since this appeal was issued, the Office of the Mayor announced it was issuing the requested permits. However three new threats immediately emerged: Homeland Security considerations may negate the granted permits; designation of an "official protest area" might likewise derail permitted activities; and the City Council passed a new ordinance limiting the right to assemble. For all these reasons, the demands cited above remain more urgent than ever. Though the G8 meeting has been moved to Camp David, we will still protest both the NATO and G8 meetings

Join the fight for the right to peacefully march and rally on May 20 in Chicago to protest the NATO/G8 summits.

View the hundreds of signers not listed here and add your name.
Visit www.unacpeace.org

March with us on May 20.
Go to www.unacpeace.org for the latest updates.

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