

# Antiwar activists raided by FBI could face prison

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The antiwar activists issued grand jury subpoenas after last week's FBI raids in Minneapolis and Chicago could face jail time for their political support for third world movements the US declares to be "terrorist," an attorney familiar with the defense case told the *World Socialist Web Site*.

On Friday, September 24, at 7 a.m. in the morning, the FBI launched simultaneous raids on the homes of eight antiwar activists in Minneapolis and Chicago.

Brandishing search warrants asserting that those under investigation have offered "material support of terrorism," FBI agents and local police ransacked the homes for between three and five hours, taking the residents' computers and cellular phones as well as thousands of books, letters, documents, and other personal belongings. In the case of the Minneapolis apartment of Mike Kelly, a member of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO), the FBI broke his door down and entered with guns drawn.

The FBI issued subpoenas demanding they appear before a grand jury in Chicago on October 12, and in the case of Minneapolis resident Tracy Molm, on October 5. It has been reported that subpoenas were also issued in Michigan and North Carolina, but homes there were evidently not raided.

The FBI's intentions at the grand jury hearing are not entirely clear, but it is possible that the Obama administration seeks criminal indictments under the "Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996," which essentially proscribes political speech in support of organizations the US president defines as "terrorist."

The law, which prohibits "knowingly provid[ing] material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization," even if the "support" consists only of "expert advice or assistance" for "lawful, non-violent

purposes," was upheld in June by the Supreme Court in the case *Humanitarian Law Project v. Holder*.

The FBI does not claim that those targeted pose any danger. "These were search warrants only," said FBI agent Steve Warfield in Minneapolis the day of the raids. "There's no imminent threat to the community."

Minneapolis attorney Bruce Nestor, who is involved in discussions over a legal defense for the raid victims, told the *World Socialist Web Site* that the government could seek to imprison the activists. This might result if the defendants refuse to speak before the grand jury, which could result in civil contempt and jail time, or if the grand jury ultimately issues criminal indictments, which would result in a criminal trial.

Nestor pointed to the chilling implications of the Obama administration's move. What movements Washington labels as "terrorist" has always depended on the aims of US imperialism. For example, the African National Congress (ANC) was, for much of the 1980s, officially labeled a terrorist operation for its struggle against apartheid in South Africa. But the Contras in Central America, who slaughtered and tortured tens of thousands of civilians in the dirty wars of the 1980s, were "freedom fighters," according to the Reagan administration.

"Anyone who was a part of the anti-apartheid network in the US, under the current law, would have faced criminal charges and could be put in prison," Nestor noted.

Nestor believes the raids have far-reaching implications, saying they appear designed to harass and intimidate the targeted groups. "But more importantly," he continued, "they will have the effect of scaring away anyone who might want to find out more, to learn about their government's activities all over the world."

"This is the first time that the authorities have aimed

broadly at what might be called ‘the mainstream antiwar activists,’” Nestor added, noting that the targeted individuals and groups are well known in the protest movement. “I don’t mean to minimize the repression that has taken place against Arab-American and Muslim groups in the US. But with these raids it appears to be a direct strike against the antiwar movement.”

In spite of the clear threat the raids level against democratic rights, the response of the liberal media has been virtual silence. The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times* have largely buried the story. The *Nation* has so far written nothing, a review of its web site reveals.

Protests against the raids have been held in a number of cities. On Monday, about 200 gathered in Minneapolis, and a smaller demonstration was organized in Chicago. In New York City about 100 gathered on Tuesday, one of thirty-two demonstrations reportedly organized across the US.



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