

Citizens Trade Campaign

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Citizens Trade Campaign Condemns Police Repression Against Political Expression during the negotiations on a Free Trade Area of the Americas *Group Calls for Immediate Accountability for Those Responsible*

Miami - Labor, Environmental, Farm, and Consumer activists condemn criminalization of dissent and brutalization of demonstrators which took place during last week's protests against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in Miami, Florida.

Despite peaceful and law abiding conduct by demonstrators, police harassed demonstrators en masse and blocked access to previously permitted space, prohibiting activists from making their voices heard. Over two hundred peaceful demonstrators were forcefully and violently arrested during the demonstrations.

"The government should be encouraging civic participation of those like myself, who came to Miami to work for a fairer trade policy," said Citizens Trade Campaign Director, Gretchen Gordon. "Instead, since I've been here, I've been forced on the ground at gunpoint, had my office repeatedly hazed by squads of police, had my volunteers shot with rubber bullets, had members of my staff chased through downtown, and seen my colleagues tazed and beaten."

"The FTAA was supposed to reinforce democracy throughout our hemisphere," said David Waskow, International Policy Analyst, Friends of the Earth - U.S. "Instead, in Miami last week, we experienced brutal and unlawful repression of free speech."

"It's condemnable enough that a massive police-state was created to prevent American citizens from directly petitioning FTAA negotiators for redress of their grievances," said Leo Gerard, International President, United Steelworkers of America. "It's doubly condemnable that \$9 million of federal funds designated for the reconstruction of Iraq were used toward this attack on the democratic right to dissent."

"This display of police repression only redoubles our efforts to make sure that our voices are heard in this process, and not silenced," said George Naylor, President, National Family Farm Coalition. "These kinds of efforts will not silence the broadening opposition of those impacted by the FTAA's policies here in the US or throughout the hemisphere."

"Police Chiefs Timoney and Alvarez, and all other responsible officials must be held politically and criminally accountable for these abuses," said Gordon. "The unjust charges against demonstrators must be dropped, and immediate, independent investigations must be made. We won't stand for the brutalization of the people of this hemisphere- not by the FTAA, and not by a police-state."

Citizens Trade Campaign is a national coalition of labor, environmental, family farm, consumer, and faith-based organizations working for social and environmentally just trade policies.