

# Outrage after two journalists detained at Indigenous protest in Canada

**Press organizations condemn arrest of Amber Bracken and Michael Toledano at pipeline protest in British Columbia**



*Supporters of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation hereditary chiefs block railway tracks in Toronto on Sunday.*

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Press organizations in Canada have condemned the arrest of two journalists who were detained while covering Indigenous-led resistance to a controversial pipeline project and remain in custody.

Amber Bracken, an award-winning photojournalist who has previously worked with the Guardian, and Michael Toledano, a documentary film-maker, were arrested on Friday by Royal Canadian Mounted police officers who were enforcing a court-ordered injunction in British Columbia. More than a dozen protesters were also arrested.

Bracken was on assignment for the environmental outlet the Narwhal, which had previously notified police that Bracken was reporting in the area.

“The Narwhal is extremely disturbed that photojournalist Amber Bracken was arrested for doing her job while reporting on the events unfolding in Wet’suwet’en territory on Friday,” said the editor-in-chief, Emma Gilchrist, in a statement. “Bracken has been held in jail for three nights, in violation of her charter rights. We strongly condemn the RCMP for this behaviour and all violations of press freedoms in this country.”

Gilchrist told the Guardian the publication had not been able to access Bracken's photos from the day she was arrested.

The Canadian Association of Journalists has condemned the arrests and called for the immediate release of the two journalists.

Bracken and Toledano have each spent months documenting tensions over the 670km Coastal GasLink pipeline that would transport natural gas from the north-eastern part of the province to a facility in Kitimat. While a number of communities have approved the project along the pipeline's proposed route, hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en peoples have refused to give consent for the project, which passes through their traditional territory. The Wet'suwet'en has never signed a formal treaty with the provincial government, and have not relinquished their land.

Police conduct against Indigenous-led blockages has drawn criticism in the past, and in 2019 the Guardian revealed that the RCMP was prepared to shoot activists.

In recent months, during a separate blockade against old-growth forest logging, police responded by ripping off protesters' masks to pepper-spray them and dragging them by their hair.

Last month, a British Columbia supreme court judge ruled that the police force's expulsion zones – set up to prevent media from entering certain areas of the injunction area – were unlawful.

The RCMP said in a statement over the weekend that its officers were enforcing a provincial court injunction granted to Coastal GasLink which bars protesters from blocking a forest road used by construction crews.

The statement says police found a structure built on the service road and ordered people to leave after reading out the injunction. Police then broke down the doors of the structure and arrested 11 people, including Bracken and Toledano, who the police said identified themselves as "independent journalists".

The two are due to appear before Prince George court on Monday.