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A N T H R O P O L O G I C A L
A S S O C I A T I O N

November 13, 2007

Rt Hon Helen Clark
Prime Minister
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Dear Prime Minister Helen Clark,

As the president of the 11,000 members of the American Anthropological Association, I write to express my concern about the recent police raids across New Zealand that resulted in the arrests of 18 individuals who were working on behalf of Maori rights, peace and the environment. In particular, we are particularly concerned that, for the first time, warrants were issued under the "Terrorism Suppression Act" (TSA) and that people in Aotearoa New Zealand are being labeled as "terrorists." We are disturbed to learn that, over a year-long period, police have systematically violated civil rights in this region as part of investigations that used wiretapping, email reading and other forms of surveillance. These civil rights violations culminated on October 15th when the police blockaded, searched and photographed Tuhoe people in the Ruatoki area. Despite the fact that police have not released evidence of their engagement in illegal activity, these 18 individuals are currently being held without bail.

Anthropologists know contemporary Maori as a peaceful people and the Aotearoa has a reputation of being a peaceful and lawful place where civil rights are upheld by the law. Maori were assured in 2002 -- when the TSA first passed -- that this Act, which threatens basic civil rights, would not be used against them. It appears that this is not the case. Rather reports from NGOs and professionals in the region suggest that the police, who have little experience with peaceful protest, are using terrorism laws for purposes for which they were not originally designed.

We are deeply concerned that the police are targeting high-profile individuals, many of whom are well-known political activists such as Tame Iti, and the Tuhoe people. While Iti employs drama and theatrical spectacle to publicize his demands, he is not violent.

We are especially concerned that police appear to be targeting indigenous communities in New Zealand. We call for New Zealand to protect the rights of its Maori citizens and to put an end to the use of aggressive tactics such as those employed during raids in Tuhoe and on the Ruatoki community.

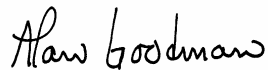
We respectfully urge that terrorism laws not become vehicles for denying the civil rights of people engaged in democratic and peaceful efforts to make New Zealand a better place for all. We urge you

to restrain the police and enjoin them to recognize courts of law as the place for reviewing evidence and making decisions about the law.

We urge the New Zealand courts to allow the activists who were held on October 18 to post bail. Further, we urge you to set out clear policies and specific strategies for resolving the current human rights issues that are affecting Maori and other activists.

We look forward to receiving information about the measures you are taking to protect these individuals' basic human rights. Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Respectfully,



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