

From: [Ani Chenier](#)
To: [Stevenson, Kirsten](#); [Farr, Jason](#); [Jackson, Tom](#); [Partridge, Judi](#); FBergen@hamiltonpolice.on.ca
Subject: Drop the charges against supporters of encampment residents!
Date: Wednesday, December 1, 2021 8:50:38 PM

Dear Chief Bergen, and dear members of the Hamilton Police Services Board,

My name is Ani Chénier, and I am a resident of Hamilton.

I am writing today to express my deep concern about the violence recently exerted against peaceful organisers associated with the Hamilton Encampment Support Network, as well as about the subsequent decision to arrest and charge some of these organisers with assault and/or obstruction of justice.

Last Wednesday (November 24), people associated with the Hamilton Encampment Support Network and other community organizations gathered at JC Beemer Park to support local encampment residents who had survived a fire and were facing eviction; police arrested two. Last Friday (November 26), others associated with the Hamilton Encampment Support Network gathered at Beasley Park, to support local encampment residents who were facing eviction. Police arrested one. Following arrests at the park, people gathered in front of the Central Police Station on Friday, to demand the release of their colleagues. Police arrested three more people there.

The people who were arrested were arrested taking care of community members who are unhoused during a housing crisis that we continue to fail to address. This is not OK, nor is charging them for engaging in nonviolent mutual aid. The conditions of their bail are such that they are now unable to continue the important support work, and maintain the friendships they had established, with unhoused people living in encampments in Hamilton. Again, this is not OK! The City should be working to provide safe housing to all. The City and its police Force should not be silencing the advocates fighting for housing justice!

The Hamilton Spectator ran a picture by photo by photographer Cathie Coward, showing one of the encampment supporters, Rowa Mohamed, pinned to the ground, with an officer kneeling on her neck and head. The picture itself was scary and painful to behold, as must have been the experience of being arrested in this manner. This is not how police should be treating peaceful organizers and people doing the important work of supporting encampment residents. It's not how people should be treating anyone! Also unacceptable is the fact that this violence appears to be disproportionately targeted at racialized members of our community, and the fact that so many of the people now criminalized for their political engagement are racialized members of our community. Black, Indigenous, and other racialized people deserve to feel safe in Hamilton, including when engaging in political advocacy! I urge you to listen to the press conference given by Black community leaders and by representatives of Black-led organizations (including the Hamilton Center for Civic Inclusion, the Afro Canadian Caribbean Association) today, and to take these leaders' advice to heart.

Please drop all charges against members of the Hamilton Encampment Support Network!

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Ani Chénier