Press Release – June 21, 2006
Journalists for Human Rights Defense League

" Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms – Fundamental Freedoms
2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:
a) freedom of conscience and religion;
b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
d) freedom of association."

The *Journalists for Human Rights Defense League* places its full support behind the proposal for an independent civilian police commission in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. It is troubling that out of ten major Canadian cities, only one city, Winnipeg, lacks such oversight of its police force. In these troubled times of war and terror, the need for police and government accountability is greater than ever.

In a post-9/11 world, it is the security industry that has benefited the most from the government largesse that has been allocated to the *War on Terror*. The tax dollars of Canadian and American citizens, numbering in the hundreds of billions of dollars, is being used to feed the new boom industry of Homeland Security. Five years after 9/11 we are witnessing the rise of the *Police Welfare State*.

The result is more high-tech weapons, more surveillance, more fear and inevitably the erosion of our rights as citizens in a democracy. Journalists are often the first to feel state repression as they try to do their work and report on the world situation. Globally, 2004 and 2005, demonstrated a marked increase in journalists being murdered and silenced for doing their job. The rights of journalists are just one of many rights being threatened.

In the name of fighting terror we have begun to be terrorized by the very forces charged with protecting us. In May 2006, in Canada, there were three instances of undercover security officers trying to instigate violence during peaceful protests. Once in Ottawa during the Bilderberg meeting, once in Caledonia during the Six Nations occupation, and once in Winnipeg during the Critical Mass bicycle rides.

Is this a trend for Canada? Has the integration of our security forces, municipally, provincially, federally and with the USA, led to the birth of the *North American Police State?* As journalists and citizens we are greatly concerned with the potential for the abuse of police power in Winnipeg and beyond. We are concerned that Winnipeg's Police Chief Jack Ewatski, and President of the Canadian Police Chiefs Association, has toured the Homeland Security Conference circuit speaking about the need for more security integration. We are concerned that without the right independent oversight of our community's police force we run the risk, as a city, of leading the way towards the erosion of human rights in Canada.

The expedient creation of a Police Commission by the Winnipeg city council and the Manitoba government would send a clear signal that Winnipeg is a progressive city and a leader in the defense of human rights and democracy.

Media Liaison
Jim Sanders – Filmmaker and Freelance Journalist, **(204) 944-1658**
http://www.dwdtv.org/humanrights.html

Interviews
Jon Schledewitz – Freelance Photographer.
(Assaulted by Winnipeg police and detained on May 3rd while working. *Winnipeg Sun and Uptown Magazine.)*
John Woods – Freelance Photographer.
(Assaulted by Winnipeg police on May 26th while working. *Formerly of the Winnipeg Sun.)*

All journalists with testimonials of their rights being violated by security forces please contact us.