

# GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Concordia University



June 7, 2011

To the Ontario Court of Justice:

The Concordia Graduate Students' Association wishes to express its support for the actions of Jaggi Singh during the G20 meetings held in June 2010 in Toronto, Ontario and urges the Court to hand down a minimal sentence. His choice to stand "with people who question the legitimacy of this fence" and his avowed support for those who want to "take down these fences and walls" that prevent us from confronting "the people who are responsible for enormous misery in the world" are the words of a person committed to social justice and we commend him for taking this principled stance.

Jaggi is not alone in these statements. Many journalists, elected officials and members of community and labor organizations who were present at the various demonstrations during the summit echoed his call to remove the physical and metaphorical barriers that limited legitimate discussion between elected leaders and citizens. The policing measures taken during the G20 meetings continue to provoke much debate in Canada, witness the parliamentary call for full inquiry into the issue calling for the federal government to issue an unprecedented apology to the *"thousands of Canadians and visitors to Toronto who had their rights violated during the G20 summit."*

The GSA Council of Directors is aware Mr. Singh has a criminal record that includes four infractions for voicing dissent. These infractions include charges for disrupting a public speech and jumping over a fence to speak to Senator Michel Fortier. On the other hand, seven other court rulings have seen fit to acquit Jaggi of all charges. A prison sentence for Jaggi's words would not be an expression of justice but a validation of the barriers our elected leaders placed between themselves and civil society.

We feel that Jaggi and activists like him deserve gratitude for being dedicated voices that advocate for and protect the freedom of expression and association of ordinary citizens. The need for such actions has been obvious in the planning, execution and aftermath of the G20 conference in Toronto, which we have no doubt will be remembered as one of the most shameful scandals in Canadian history. We question why the Canadian justice system is being used to prosecute Jaggi Singh for principled statements, rather than the persons responsible for ordering and carrying out the mass detention of peaceful protesters.

Sincerely

Robert Sonin, President on behalf of the 2011-12 GSA Council of Directors