

2008/23/04 PM #6

20080423/077/Teanu/Irm 6/PM

STATEMENT BY THE INDIGENOUS ICT TASKFORCE

Kia ora

My name is Teanau Tuiono I am a Maori from Aotearoa. I am speaking on behalf of the International Indigenous ICT Taskforce which came out of the World Summit on the Information Society. One of the aims of that process was to set up an Indigenous Portal that we launched here last year.

Indigenous Peoples are a valuable part of the Information Society and this portal is a place to share, with our own voices, our traditions, values, history as well as our aspirations for the future, in a way that supports the work of the global Indigenous community.

That Portal is now a reality and the NGO Pacific Voices is the editorial collective collating relevant content for the Pacific region. We did a follow up side event this year to highlight the direction we are taking. We also launched our logo competition - more information can be found at indigenousportal.com if you would like to enter.

The story of the Indigenous Portal has its ups and downs.

Indigenous Connectivity is an issue that needs to be urgently addressed

We are also concerned that Indigenous communications, Indigenous activities and legitimate political dissent are being labeled terrorism.

In October the 15 last year the Indigenous Portal was taken offline after the server was seized by the New Zealand Police over alleged terrorist activity. Maori and other activists had houses raided and arrests were made across the country under Anti-Terrorism legislation enacted in the wake of September 11.

Our programmer and technical support person was arrested at gun point by a large number of Police in the suburb of Manurewa. He was incarcerated for a month and is now out on bail. Family members of that household were taken and placed face down in the gutter with guns to their heads. One of them was a 12 year old girl.

I was also detained and separated from my partner and children as a large number of Police came thru my house where they accused me of being part of a terrorist organisation a number of articles were confiscated including this lap top that I am reading from.

The Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples, the Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights and the Secretary General's Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders all expressed their concern about the detention of Maori and others using the Terrorism Suppression Act to the New Zealand Government.

The Indigenous Portal is now being hosted by our Mohawk brothers and sisters in the community of Kahnawake.

ICTs can be a powerful medium to support the work of Indigenous Peoples, it crosses borders, and cultures. In order to foster an environment where the exchange of information and knowledge can take place, the Indigenous Portal seeks partnerships that use the Indigenous Portal as a platform to create ICT and Media initiatives.

We have the following recommendations:

Governments should not use terrorism as an excuse to censor Indigenous dissent or limit the freedom of speech.

The UNPFII and other UN agencies such as the ITU should support Indigenous led ICT initiatives - our logo and the link on your website would be a good start

We call for Universal Indigenous connectivity and the development of Indigenous-specific ICTs. These should be viewed as a necessity for healthy communities.