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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Human Right Commissioner launches inquiry to shed light on exclusion zones and press freedom

Inquiry to review restrictions on media during April 2023 Downtown Eastside decampment

Vancouver B.C. – B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner has launched an inquiry into the exclusion or restriction of the media from an April 2023 decampment in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES).

While there were multiple reports of journalists being denied access to the area and encountering blockades at key intersections during the DTES decampment, the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) asserts there was no exclusion zone and that press were only asked to congregate at a muster point for safety reasons.

The Commissioner's inquiry aims to discover the truth behind the alleged DTES exclusion zone and determine the source of police authority to create such zones absent a court injunction. The inquiry aims to safeguard the rights of marginalized communities and uphold the principles of press freedom. It will also develop recommendations.

"When police may potentially come into conflict with some of society's most marginalized people during a police operation, allegations of media being excluded or restricted from reporting on those operations raise serious red flags and merit investigation," said Commissioner Kasari Govender. "The B.C. public rely on the media to gather and publish information, including on any potential human rights violations. The press plays a key role in our democracy and the protection of human rights."

In November 2023, the Vancouver Police Board dismissed a complaint about the use of media exclusion zones during the DTES decampment. The Human Rights Commissioner's inquiry will look at the issue more broadly.

More information about the inquiry can be found on the Commissioner's website at bchumanrights.ca/media-exclusion-inquiry.

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Media contact

To request an interview with Commissioner Kasari Govender, please contact media@bchumanrights.ca or 604-306-7369.

Media kit

[Visit](#) our media kit for images of Commissioner Kasari Govender and other resources.

About BCOHRC

BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner exists to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C. by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures. We do this work through education, research, advocacy, inquiry and monitoring. Learn more at: bchumanrights.ca

About the Commissioner

B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, started her five-year term on Sept. 3, 2019. As an independent officer of the Legislature, Commissioner Govender is uniquely positioned to ensure human rights in B.C. are protected, respected and advanced on a systemic level. Her work through BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner centres listening deeply to British Columbians to inform educational materials, policy guidance, public inquiries, interventions, community-based research and more that protects marginalized communities, addresses discrimination and injustice and upholds human rights for all.

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