

## **IMC Northern England Guidelines: Reporting an Infiltrator or Informer**

### **Preamble**

While Indymedia is primarily a resource for grassroots reporting on news, it should be acknowledged that it provides various other valuable resources to the community that use it, in particular around the dissemination of information of value to the activist / grassroots community.

As part of that, Indymedia is on occasion used to publish stories exposing undercover police who have infiltrated campaigning groups (eg. “Mark Stone/Kennedy”) or individuals who have tried to turn on the movements they belong to (eg. Robin Steele or Matthew Gibbons).

It is recognised that in spreading this information that Indymedia is an invaluable tool and one that is important to the campaigning movement. Part of this is because it is a feature of informers and infiltrators that they use their contacts in one movement to gain entry to other one. This means that there is a crucial need to get information out as fast and as widely as possible.

The flip side to this, is that unsubstantiated allegations are highly damaging to the individuals and serve to manufacture dissent more than anything else. Indymedia needs to avoid becoming a source of scurrilous rumour and disinformation.

It has been suggested that Indymedia should avoid this sort of reporting altogether as it is too easy to abuse, a position which has some merit. However, this is not going to be welcomed by the movements it is professing to serve. The following guidelines are an attempt to bridge the gap between these poles.

A good defence against disinformation is for the local IMC to have contacts in the local community, we can try to be a make-up of the movement that uses the site.

### **Guidelines**

#### **Definitions**

The following guidelines relate to any allegation regarding an individual or group deliberately working with the security services (including the police), the mainstream media or security firm for the purposes of passing on information which:

1. compromises the safety and well-being of campaigners; or
2. threatens to jeopardise the effectiveness of grassroots campaigning.

This can apply to a situation where someone is:

3. an infiltrator: someone who deliberately inserted to a group/campaign to gather information/disrupt;
4. an informer: a member of a group / campaign who is passing on information; or

5. a grass: someone who has turned on their former colleagues following an arrest.

### Best Practise

\* For a story exposing someone as an informer, infiltrator or grass to be accepted by the Northern England IMC collective, the story has to be

\* Accredited by a known and established group.

\* Include public points of contact who are prepared to actively communicate with queries relating to the exposure.

\* Release the evidence used to substantiate the claim, where possible. Note, this should preferably include screenshots / scans of documents rather than just text.

\* A formal statement from the investigating group, including where possible account of how the matter was dealt with, ideally containing whether or not the individual exposed has been confronted.

\* Details of how other groups may have been affected by the presence of the infiltrator/informer/grass if necessary.

\* A photo or description.

The reasons for this is to

\* Allow for independent verification of the group and how it came to the decision so that others can have confidence in the story and are able to take appropriate action if necessary.

1. To ensure that best practice has been followed as far as possible, current best practice being set out in the documents available at [activistsecurity.org](http://activistsecurity.org) and [security.resist.ca](http://security.resist.ca). This is important so that

1. Indymedia is not being used as a pawn in a personal vendetta or 'witch hunt'.

2. Individuals and groups are not being libelled.

2. To ensure that affected groups can act as swiftly as possible to limit damage, given that not all groups that an infiltrator may have been involved with those doing the expose.

3. To act as a record to prevent that individual gaining access to other groups in the future.

\* It is accepted that the above process may not be appropriate in all cases and that not all the criteria may be fulfilled, eg.

1. those investigating do not consist of a well established group; or

2. that for the protection of individuals, there can only be a restricted release.

In this situation, endorsement by other known and established groups is required.

This includes the endorsing group(s)

3. putting the story on their own website;

4. being willing to respond to queries regarding the accuracy of the exposure

5. be named, and have their contact details, included with the expose.

The reason for this is to allow a network of trust to be established.

\* The local indymedia collective, as ever, retains the right to the final decision on whether or not to pull the story. This does not preclude those doing the expose approaching the relevant local indymedia groups and that an IMC can give the story its

own endorsement on the basis of having verified it for themselves. Where possible, the relevant IMC collective should be contacted in advance.

- \* Once the veracity of the story has been established, details of email accounts and phone numbers will not be hidden. Residential addresses shall not be published by Indymedia unless there are pressing reasons relating to the safety of others that require their publication.

- \* Allegations that are vague, anonymous or do not have adequate supporting evidence shall be removed.