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Quebec

Police shoot explosives at student protesters' heads in Montreal

- News from around the world -

Publication date: Monday 19 March 2012

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I'm just back as a medic from the large student strike and anti-police brutality demonstration in Montreal where the cops were shooting exploding tear gas canisters and flash-bang grenades into crowds of people – really irresponsible, criminal and injurious.

We know that protesters in the West Bank and Gaza have been killed and seriously injured after being hit by tear gas canisters and so-called crowd control projectiles – so this alarm is not just about the chemical effects, but also the kinetic trauma cause by the shooting projectile or explosion.

I treated a student (on Alymer and Milton) who had a police tear gas canister explode when it hit his forehead. Fortunately, he was wearing goggles because he could have been blinded. His hair was singed from the explosion, and he had a superficial skin burn besides the cut and bruise on his forehead. His goggles were covered in chemical powder. I assume the canisters explode on impact (his head in this case) because besides the physical signs, he said it exploded when it hit him.

Ironically, he was telling high-school kids not to throw rocks because this was a peaceful demonstration, just before he got injured. The riot police chased a group of people up the street and shot two tear gas explosives into the crowd. These were not flash-bangs because the tear gas was stinging our eyes and I see the cloud.

(Those of you not from Montreal, a student may have been permanently blinded in one eye a week ago during a protest when hit by either a police flash-bang or a rubber "bullet" shot into the group of students. He was playing the harmonica at the time.)

Tonight, I heard at least six, if not eight of these explosions, and when I could see, they were exploding inside crowds of students. The last two explosions were when the riot police had surrounded a group of 50 or 100 students passively standing arm in arm, chanting, on rue Berri outside the Biblioteque nationale (National Library). They then told them they were under arrest, and arrested them. It was surreal to see riot police running inside the Biblioteque nationale.

I think us Montreal demo veterans need to somehow impress upon the powers that shooting explosives and projectiles into crowds of people is a criminal act of violence – regardless of what the police say about less-than-lethal crowd control. We can see how the police are ratcheting up the use of dangerous weapons against protesters.

I don't know if this is directly related, but this is another reason to oppose the security agreements and co-operation between the Israeli Defense Forces who do this stuff all the time, and the Canadian police.

Video from yesterday's protest is available from the Montreal Gazette [here](#).