

‘ATOS TWO’ CASE “DISCONTINUED”

The charges of aggravated trespass against the ‘Atos Two’ have been “discontinued”, i.e. dropped, by the CPS.

In September 2011, two Nottingham residents, a retired paediatric nurse and a wheelchair user were arrested following a peaceful protest at the local offices of Atos ‘Healthcare’. Faced with an impressive solidarity campaign and having a pathetically weak case, the CPS and Atos backed down.

Supporters of the ‘Atos Two’ are clear however that this case, described as an attempt to intimidate protesters and deter demonstrations, is not an isolated one.

The arrests of Notts Uncut activists just before Christmas and the confiscation of a photography student’s tapes after he filmed an arrest demonstrate that the local force is changing their attitude towards peaceful protest.

This seems to have been confirmed by a police officers’ remark who commented on the arrest of the ‘Atos Two’ by stating that there “had been too much of this sort of thing and we were told to crack down on it”.

Furthermore Atos can be expected to remain a focus for local activists campaigning against public sector cuts and attacks on the welfare system.

Jamie Kennedy from the Nottingham Defence Campaign said: “Atos remains committed to make people’s lives a misery and is one of the many examples why we need much more of ‘this sort of thing.’”

There will be a protest against Atos and police repression on Friday 3rd February 2012 at 12.30pm in Hockley (Nottingham; see <http://nottingham.indymedia.org/articles/2335>).

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Notes for editors

- 1) Regarding the original protest against Atos see: <http://nottingham.indymedia.org/articles/2053>
- 2) Regarding the charges against the ‘Atos Two’ see: <http://nottingham.indymedia.org/articles/2168>
- 3) Regarding the solidarity campaign for the ‘Atos Two’ see: <http://nottingham.indymedia.org.uk/articles/2207>
- 4) Regarding the arrests of Notts Uncut activists see: <http://nottingham.indymedia.org.uk/articles/2276>
- 5) Regarding the harassment of student photographer see: <http://nottingham.indymedia.org.uk/articles/2238>
- 6) A Statement of Support for the Atos Two has been signed by more than a hundred persons and organisations, including Welfare Rights Groups, Councillors and John McDonnell MP: <http://nottingham.indymedia.org/articles/2195>
- 7) Atos Healthcare was selected by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to administer the Work Capability Assessments (WCA).

Campaigners claim that WCA are part of a deliberate policy by the coalition government designed to force as many people as possible off disability benefits regardless of their physical and/or psychological abilities.

Critics of Atos Healthcare point to the high number of successful appeals against decisions by the company. A report by BBC Inside Out East found that more than one third of appeals were successful. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-15681502>)

Furthermore the expertise and conduct of the so called ‘healthcare professionals’ undertaking the assessments has been severely questioned by campaigners. In August it emerged that twelve doctors employed by the company were being investigated by the General Medical Council over allegations of improper conduct. (<http://gu.com/p/3x7jd>)