On 7 December, 2005, Maya Evans, a vegan chef aged 25, was convicted of breaching the new Serious Organised Crime and Police Act by reading aloud at the Cenotaph the names of 97 British soldiers killed in Iraq. So serious was her crime that it required 14 policemen in two vans to arrest her. She was given a conditional discharge and ordered to pay £100 in costs after being found guilty of breaching Section 132 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005. She now has a criminal record.

Eighty-year-old John Catt served with the RAF in the Second World War. In September 2005, he was stopped by police in Brighton for wearing an "offensive" T-shirt which suggested that President Bush and UK PM Tony Blair be tried for war crimes. He was arrested under the Terrorism Act and handcuffed, with his arms held behind his back.

The official record of the arrest says the "purpose" of searching him was "terrorism" and the "grounds for intervention" were "carrying placard and T-shirt with anti-Blair info" (sic).

Three years on, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) upheld a complaint that Sussex Police acted unlawfully in using the Terrorism Act to stop him.

The IPCC said: "Using the stop and search powers in the Terrorism Act for public order

purposes is not consistent with the intentions of the Act."
Source: John Pilger, New Statesman, the Independent and the Telegraph .co.UK

The issues?

- What impacts do you think these arrests would have on the freedom of expression?
- If there was no threat to law and order, what do you think was the reason behind the arrests.
- Post 9/11 what are the impacts on the right to dissent?
- Would this level of protest be permissible in New Zealand?
- What is your view of dissent in our society?