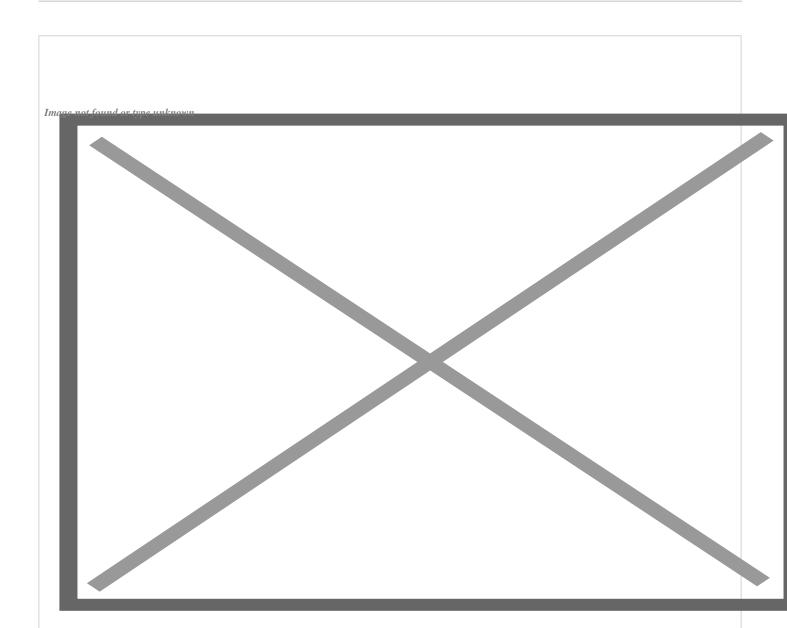# Canada intensifies crackdown as protests spread

Canadian truckers line up on Metcalfe Street as they honk their horns in Ottawa, Ontario, on February 6, 2022. (Photo via social media networks)

Ottawa, February 8 (RHC)-- Police in Canada's national capital have seized thousands of liters of fuel as part of a crackdown to end days long protest against the government's COVID-19 measures. Ottawa has been gridlocked by a so-called "Freedom Convoy" consisting of truckers and other motorists for 11 days now.

What started as a movement opposing a Canadian vaccine mandate for cross-border drivers - a requirement mirrored by a US rule - has morphed into a rallying point against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau' public health measures.

The government has already declared a state of emergency in the country's capital, with its mayor pledging to get "the city back" from protesters. The 'Freedom Convoy' arrived in Ottawa last weekend to protest at the Canadian government's vaccine mandate for cross-border truckers, which led to blocking downtown streets.

Trudeau appeared on Monday for the first time in nearly a week after being infected by COVID, saying the protest has to stop. He and his family left Ottawa to an undisclosed location as the convoy started rolling into the city due to security concerns.

The protests against COVID-19 restrictions spread to other cities across the North American country over the weekend, including Toronto, Edmonton, Halifax, and Vancouver.

The police department has asked the Ottawa mayor for a "significant increase" in resources to deal with the unrest, police chief Peter Sloly said Monday. "We have been 100% full out on this for the last 10 days straight, and we will not rest until it's done, but we need more help," Sloly said.

At least seven arrests were made Sunday in the city and at least 450 citations issued since Saturday morning, the Ottawa Police Service said. The demonstrations began as an objection to a recent vaccine mandate requiring truckers entering Canada to either be fully vaccinated or face testing and quarantine requirements. Other protesters have joined to rail against mask mandates, lockdowns, restrictions on gatherings and other COVID-19 preventative efforts.

"The whole event has gone beyond just vaccines, and it is now about the entire ordeal," protester James MacDonald told CNN, adding he's been in Ottawa since last weekend and has no plan to leave until health measures are dropped.

In Vancouver, several hundred vehicles traveled through the city en route to a demonstration there. Five people were arrested Saturday. They were taken to jail and released, police said. Quebec City similarly reported thousands of protesters and hundreds of trucks clogging streets.

In Winnipeg, a man drove into a crowd, hitting four people, according to the police. The suspect was arrested after a brief struggle with law enforcement officers, authorities said.

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