

One group of officers, two allegations of brutality

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Adam Nobody poses in Queen's Park on November 29, 2010, in the spot where he claims he was chased, arrested and then repeatedly beaten by police on Saturday, June 26, 2010, during the G20 protests in Toronto.

One is a Somali immigrant and former youth worker, arrested one summer night in a west Toronto suburb for illegally carrying a loaded handgun. The other is a freelance stage builder, rounded up at Queen's Park a year later during protests against the G20.

The latter, Adam Nobody, is well known as the man at the centre of the most high-profile allegations of police brutality during the summit; the former, Abbas Jama, is one of many people convicted of firearm offences in Toronto this year.

But both men accuse the same group of undercover officers of roughing them up and humiliating them during their arrests.

In Mr. Jama's pre-trial hearings over the past few weeks, the officers testified about both cases. It was all part of Mr. Jama's bid to have his charges thrown out. His lawyer argued that were parallels in the way the officers allegedly treated the two men.

A judge nonetheless convicted the 26-year-old of weapons charges on Monday.

Around 11:30 p.m. on June 24, 2009, a group of undercover officers that included constables Todd Storey and Luke Watson and Detective Michael DiCosola tried to arrest Mr. Jama near Capri Road and the East Mall. He fled, they chased him down and made the arrest as he tried to run into the apartment block where he lived.

After noticing a security camera on the building, Mr. Jama alleged in an affidavit last November, the officers led him away and twice threw him to the ground – on a patch of nearby grass and later on the pavement near a police cruiser – where they kicked him in the head and punched his

body as he lay face down in handcuffs. The officers admitted punching him outside the building, but said he was resisting them and they only used the force necessary to control him. They denied beating him subsequently.

Mr. Jama said Det. DiCosola also interrogated and punched him in an interview room at the 22 division police station, while hurling racial insults. When Mr. Jama vomited in the corner, he alleged that the officer used him as a “human mop,” dragging his body across the mess and sopping it up with his clothes. (Det. DiCosola maintained he had no contact with Mr. Jama at the station.)

On June 26, 2010, the same three officers encountered Mr. Nobody. Police in riot gear handed him to constables Storey and Watson. Constable Storey testified that he appeared to be lightly hurt, but that he didn’t fill out an injury report.

“He had some bruising to his face, mud and blood on his left cheek,” he said.

Both officers testified Mr. Nobody co-operated, though he swore as they led him away. They took him between two parked paddy-wagons, searched him and expressed disbelief at his unusual last name. Det. DiCosola filled out the paperwork and they sent him onto a temporary detention centre.

In his testimony in the Jama case, Mr. Nobody, however, added several details to the story that police denied. While he lay on the ground, his hands tied behind his back by zip-cuffs, he alleged Constable Watson stood on his head and both men punched and kicked him. All the while, he said, they swore, hurled taunts and challenged him to fight.

The officers’ testimony still left some matters opaque: they said a riot squad officer who appeared to be with the Toronto police gave them the badge number – 10924 – that they wrote on Mr. Nobody’s arrest papers. The number, it turned out, belongs to a Montreal officer who was not at the G20.

Neither could they explain why Mr. Nobody was charged with assaulting Constable Storey, who said such an assault never happened.

Both constables Storey and Watson were investigated in Mr. Nobody’s case by the province’s Special Investigations Unit, which ruled there wasn’t enough evidence to charge them. The SIU charged a different officer, Constable Babak Andalib-Goortani, alleged to have been among the group that first arrested Mr. Nobody. That case is working its way through the courts.

In the end, Mr. Nobody’s story was also not enough to sway Mr. Justice Robert Clark, who allowed proceedings to continue against Mr. Jama, who was sentenced Monday to three years and 11 months. With credit for time already served, he was left with one more day in prison.

His lawyer said he planned to complete his political science degree, for which he had previously studied at Carleton University, and help operate a small business with his brother.