

Occupy Atlanta: Protesters speak after forcible eviction from park

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Atlanta's Mayor Kasim Reed unleashed hundreds of police in the middle of the night early Wednesday morning to evict tens of Occupy Atlanta protesters who have been peaceably occupying the downtown Troy Davis Park (formally named Woodruff Park) for over three weeks, since October 7.

Reed, who is a Democrat and famous for his uncontrolled outbursts, suddenly revoked his "executive order" of October 17 allowing the protesters to stay in the park until at least the next Atlanta city council meeting on November 7.

On Tuesday, Reed sent a delegation of "concerned" clergy to supposedly negotiate with the protesters. They demanded a meeting at 5 p.m. despite Occupy Atlanta having announced days earlier that they planned to hold a march to the Georgia Pacific building at 5 p.m.

The clergy were a political cover for Reed who was utilizing them to get the protesters out of the park with their help. Nevertheless, Occupy Atlanta representatives offered to meet the clergy on Thursday afternoon instead. Reed then made his move that night, not even waiting for the clergy to meet with the protesters, demonstrating the mayor's duplicity.

Late at night, at around 11 p.m. on Tuesday, Atlanta police made preparations to raid the park. With sirens blaring and scores of flashing lights throwing their intense glare upon a relatively dark park, the protesters were surrounded by huge contingents of police in riot gear, on horseback, on motorcycles, and on foot. A heavily armed police SWAT team also stood by.

At around midnight, the deputy police chief gave an ultimatum to the protesters to leave the park or face arrest. Several protesters left with their belongings while tens of others decided to defy the order and court arrest.

These protesters then sat in a circle linking their arms

and chanting slogans and singing songs. The protesters on the sidewalk meanwhile shouted slogans in support of the ones in the park as the police with flashlights warned those in the park and tents to leave or be subject to arrest. Many were dragged out to waiting police buses handcuffed with plastic ties.

Although the local media described the arrests as "without incident," several protesters commented to the WSWS that the police used substantial force to tear individual protesters from the next person in a bid to unlock their arms.

At least 52 people (some reports claimed 53) were arrested, with all of them being taken to the Atlanta detention center at around 2 a.m. on Wednesday. Arrestees were charged with being in violation of the city ordinance that bans people from staying in the park between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.

The scheduled 8 a.m. appearance before a judge was delayed to noon on Wednesday because the computer system used to check the arrestees' criminal records was malfunctioning.

All of the arrested except for two, who the police claimed had prior arrest warrants from other jurisdictions, were released on signature bonds. Although the media claimed that the bond amounted to \$100, at least one of the released who spoke to the WSWS had a \$500 bond imposed. All of the arrested were represented by attorneys who volunteered their time for free.

Two of the arrested protesters spoke to the WSWS outside the jail soon after they were released. Laila, a sophomore at Georgia State University (GSU), said: "The police came decked out in their goggles and other gear. They seemed ready to attack. We were sitting in a circle with our arms linked with one another.

"They used forceful techniques that I had never

experience before to separate each of us who were all very peaceful. They were very physical and they dragged us away.

“They brought us to the detention center and we sat there for hours and hours doing nothing. They asked for our name and address four different times at four different desks. They had separated males from females. But then they put us all in the same room to take mugshots, curtly telling us not to speak to the men next to you, but you could speak to the girls.

“There were 40 males and all of them were put in a single holding cell which was packed. The girls had sitting room. They gave us bologna sandwiches and many of us are vegan and hence we had nothing to eat.”

When asked about the actions of the mayor throughout the occupation of the park, Laila continued, “The mayor has been flip-flopping probably to keep us on our toes about his intentions. I don’t know what he wants, but we are going to keep doing what we are doing.”

Scott, another protester who had just been released from jail, said, “They did not give us much advance warning and then the police moved in. They were quite physical and they violently threw an older guy who was kneeling to the ground. However, most of us did not get too roughed up by the cops. They put zip ties on my wrists very tightly.” Scott displayed his wrists that were bruised red.

“The foot cops strangely seemed to be sympathetic to us. I was happy to get arrested, because I knew what I was doing and why I was doing it.”

Scott added, “Reed is a liar and he has lost all credibility with me. He is a thoroughly deceitful person.”

After being released the protesters held a rally Wednesday night at Atlanta’s Centennial Park that was constructed just prior to the 1996 Olympics. The protesters have vowed to continue their protests and eventually reoccupy the park.



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