

Occupy Wall Street enters second month amid global protests

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The Occupy Wall Street protest in lower Manhattan marked the completion of its first month Monday. The anniversary came just two days after mass demonstrations around the world gave powerful expression to the growing anger of working people in country after country over the conditions of mass unemployment, falling living standards and stark inequality that have been created by capitalism around the globe.

The month-old protest movement has provoked wildly divergent responses from the masses of working people and the ruling elite in New York City, one of the most socially polarized cities in the world.

A Quinnipiac University poll released on Monday indicated that fully two-thirds of New York City's registered voters support the demonstrators' hostility to the banks and their demands for social equality.

According to the poll, 67 percent of those polled said they supported the views expressed by the protesters, while only 23 percent said they opposed them. Meanwhile, New Yorkers by an overwhelming margin of 87 percent to 10 percent support the right of the demonstrators to remain in Liberty Plaza.

As the poll was released, New York City's billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg used a news conference in the borough of Queens Monday to issue another thinly veiled threat to use police force to break up the month-old occupation.

"The Constitution doesn't protect tents," Bloomberg told reporters. "It protects speech and assembly."

The mayor, who owes his personal fortune of over \$18 billion to his long connections to Wall Street, continued, "We can't have a place where only one point of view is allowed. There are places where I think it's appropriate to express yourself, and there are other places that are appropriate to set up Tent City. They

don't necessarily have to be one and the same."

The city and the private corporate owner of the occupied park, Brookfield Office Properties, backed down last Friday from a plan to use police force to clear the area on the pretext that it had to be cleaned. The tactical retreat by the city came in the face of a mobilization of thousands of supporters of the protest movement in Friday's pre-dawn hours.

Bloomberg made it clear that the police would be used to prevent any occupation of a city park, but suggested that Liberty Plaza's corporate owner would have to call for police action there.

"This is not a city park," he said. "A city park, we have rules and regulations. We have curfews. We enforce those and would enforce those no matter who it was or what their objectives were. But this is owned by Brookfield and they'll have to make that decision."

The mayor's formal avowals of respecting First Amendment rights notwithstanding, there can be no doubt that the city and Brookfield are actively preparing to suppress the month-old demonstration.

The New York Police Department has arrested nearly 900 demonstrators since the protest began on September 17 and has repeatedly employed excessive force and brutality, including during the protest march that saw as many as 20,000 people pour into Times Square on Saturday evening. Mounted police were sent charging into packed crowds in an attempt to drive them back, and cops arrested over 80 people.

Another 700 were arrested on October 1 after police led marchers halfway across the Brooklyn Bridge, only to surround them and carry out mass arrests.

Lawyers representing the demonstrators are demanding that all charges—most of them summonses and desk appearance tickets for minor offenses such as resisting arrest, obstructing traffic, or wearing a

mask—be dropped. If not, they threaten to clog the courts by taking all the cases to trial.

The first of the cases are set to come up on November 15, when 60 demonstrators are supposed to appear before a judge.

Meanwhile, Occupy Wall Street-inspired protests continued in many cities in the US and worldwide Monday, after the weekend's demonstrations brought hundreds of thousands into the streets.

In many cities, protests continued in spite of mass arrests and police intimidation. In Chicago, for example, 175 people were arrested in the early morning hours Sunday on charges of violating an 11 pm curfew in Grant Park. The Chicago Tribune reported Monday that officials in the administration of Mayor Rahm Emanuel, President Barack Obama's former top White House aide, viewed the mass arrests as a “trial run” for even larger scale repression next May, when the city is set to host back-to-back G-8 and NATO summits.

In Phoenix, Arizona, protesters marched on the city's jail chanting, “Bankers got a bailout, we got jail,” after 45 demonstrators were arrested early Sunday for failing to leave downtown's Margaret T. Hance Park by 10:30 pm.

Earlier on Saturday, police had provided a cordon of protection for a group of neo-fascists organized in the anti-immigrant “Arizona Border Guard,” who staged an armed counter-demonstration against the thousands of anti-Wall Street protesters. The fascists paraded in combat fatigues carrying assault rifles.

Meanwhile, in Europe, hundreds of demonstrators, styling themselves Occupy London Stock Exchange, remained encamped in a square outside of London's St. Paul's Cathedral. The church's authorities on Sunday demanded that police trying to expel the demonstrators leave.

Hundreds more demonstrators erected 50 tents outside the European Central Bank in Frankfurt, Germany, where several thousand had demonstrated on Saturday. And in the Netherlands, protesters had pitched some 40 tents outside the Amsterdam stock exchange.

On Monday, European Union leaders issued phony expressions of sympathy for the hundreds of thousands of protesters who had turned out in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Britain, Germany and elsewhere across Europe.

In a news conference that followed a meeting with

businessmen and union officials, EU Council president Herman Van Rompuy declared, “The concerns of those young people on growth and employment are totally legitimate. But our responsibility is to go through this unpopular period in order to safeguard a better future.”

In other words, the “legitimate” concerns notwithstanding, Europe's ruling elites will continue with the savage austerity policies that are driving up unemployment and destroying the social rights of working people.

The WSWS continues its coverage today of the weekend's protests with on-the-spot reports from the US, Australia and Britain.



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