

Police raid Occupy San Diego, make 51 arrests

Our reporters
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San Diego police carried out a raid early Friday morning, making 51 arrests and clearing out Occupy San Diego protesters who had been maintaining their encampment for three weeks.

At about 2 a.m. Friday, dozens of police officers and San Diego County sheriff's deputies surrounded Civic Center Plaza and Children's Park, closing in on protesters at both locations. Police were armed with batons, billy clubs; a few reportedly had guns of some sort.

The press claims there were no injuries immediately reported, but 51 were arrested and all tents, tables and other belongings of protesters were confiscated. This is but one raid in a wave of brutal police repression that has occurred over the past week.

The first location to be hit by the police raid was Children's Park, the logistical headquarters of the San Diego occupation. Cheryl, a demonstrator who was present during the raid, stated that police moved quickly and quietly, giving no warning of their presence.

The staggered timing of the two raids suggests that police were expecting protesters to flee from Children's Park to the San Diego Civic Center, where the main body of protesters was located. Police entered in two phalanxes to the civic center, one on the west side and the other headed south down 3rd Avenue. A reserve body of officers could be seen on 3rd and B, pushing protesters east and south.

Around 2:30 a.m., a police officer ordered the crowd to pack up their belongings and move, saying the protest had been deemed an "unlawful assembly." Similar to the actions taken at Children's Park, there had been no forewarning of the action and many protesters were still asleep. Soon after the announcement, the police began inching in on the

protesters, consistently tightening their perimeter.

A video on Occupy San Diego's Livestream shows the arrest of a reporter and media team spokesperson Kali within a half hour of the police moving in. According to the Occupy San Diego Facebook page, several people were beaten by police. Reports by protesters in the plaza said that two teenage girls were brutally beaten by the police.

Reporters were not allowed to document the arrests and were told they too would be arrested if they remained. Protesters attempted to contact various media outlets, but they reportedly had been requested by the police not to respond to calls. One legal observer, a member of the National Lawyer's Guild, was arrested while trying to document the incident.

As police marched in and forced the protesters out of the plaza, people were chanting, "The whole world is watching!" and "We are not armed!" Many of the protesters arrested remained seated in the plaza, refusing to leave. Some of them were documented on the Livestream prior to their arrest, before the cameras were forced out of the plaza.

Police set up water-filled barriers and stood guard in the plaza to prevent protesters from coming back. Occupy San Diego's Facebook page states that the demonstrators regrouped at Harbor Drive and marched back to the Civic Center around 8:30 Friday morning.

A day prior to the raid, San Diego Police Chief William Landsdone pledged to protesters that he would ensure that "nothing like Oakland would happen in San Diego," a reference to the brutal raid carried out in Northern California just days earlier.

In fact, the Friday raid is an escalation of a process that had already begun on October 14, when protesters were told to remove their tents and other structures as per city ordinances. When demonstrators attempted to

civilly disobey, they were met with strong repression: all but one tent was dismantled; there were two separate macing incidents and two arrests. The occupation was corralled and moved to a smaller space in an effort to clear the venue.

Republican Mayor Jerry Sanders, a retired police chief, was notified of the decision to raid the occupation. This brings to a close the city council's pretense of debate over the question of supporting the occupation. It also brings into sharp relief the futility of "reaching out" to the political establishment. Occupiers had previously approached the city council for a statement of solidarity with their cause. After presenting a drafted letter to the council Tuesday morning, their call was pushed aside, resulting in a call for an immediate vote of support. All council members exited the room, citing that the attendees had derailed the meeting.

When reporters for the *World Socialist Web Site* arrived at the occupation site after the Friday raid, they found dozens of police maintaining their hold on the plaza. A makeshift crime scene was constructed to gather evidence of the alleged brutalization of two teenage girls. An area where bloodstains could be seen was marked off with red tape and various supporters were gathering samples.

As city employees sprayed down the site of the occupation, reporters observed one police officer motioning to one of the workers to spray water in the direction of the alleged site of police brutality. Protesters quickly formed an impromptu dam to prevent the erasure of the evidence. This quickly escalated into a standoff as officers formed a wall in direct proximity to the assembled protesters and the site.

Those interviewed expressed a general feeling that the police clampdown would only further fuel the occupations. As interviewee Jay noted, "This movement won't stop. It is organic and has roots in the injustice and inequalities in society."



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