

Police use pepper spray against unarmed protesters in Davis, California

Jack Hood**19 November 2011**

Students protesting social inequality and tuition hikes at the University of California, Davis were surrounded by police and pepper sprayed on Friday, before police retreated in the face of increasing numbers of peaceful protesters. As of 5:00 pm, hundreds of students remained at the location of a planned encampment.

The police response in Davis followed violent attacks on unarmed protesters in Berkeley and Oakland, California, along with other cities throughout the country. A video of the police response and retreat can be viewed [here](#).

Approximately 60 police officers, in full riot gear and with rubber bullet guns and pepper spray, participated in the crackdown. After hearing word of the confrontation, hundreds of students from the area poured onto the quad in support of their fellow students and forced police to retreat.

As posted video shows, a police officer used pepper spray on students peacefully sitting on the walk-way, spraying the flank of students one time, and then going back to spray them with the chemical irritant once again. Police also pointed paintball guns at students' faces and threatened to hit them with truncheons.

Students chanted, "you use weapons, we use words" as police officers shook canisters of pepper spray and shot them from a six-inch distance into students' faces. At least one student was shot by a rubber bullet.

"It burns!" yelled one student with tears in her eyes.

Another student, Adam, said, "Feel like my forehead is blistering."

"We were sitting in a circle and we were attacked! We were sitting in our quad and students were sprayed in the eyes," said Carla, a UC Davis undergrad.

Police arrested ten students on charges of "illegal overnight camping" despite the fact that UC Davis Chancellor Katehi, who ordered the police attack, had explicitly allowed students to camp on the quad Wednesday night.

When approached by the police in riot gear, a group of students walked out to meet them holding the first amendment on a piece of paper.

As police made the arrests, several hundred students encircled the police and chanted "shame on you." As the crowd grew and the police were clearly outnumbered, the crowd, through a "human microphone," informed the police: "We are willing, to give you a brief moment, of peace, to take your weapons, and your friends, and go!"

About 100 students had formed an encampment of 40 tents on Thursday afternoon and planned to remain in the quad indefinitely. At 2:00 pm on Friday, students received word that Chancellor Katehi would no longer tolerate the protests and would permit an attack, beginning at 3:00 pm.

A police communiqué delivered to the encampment at 2:30 tricked the protesters into thinking that they would be not face police violence.

"I know that you have received a letter from the Chancellor respectfully asking you to peacefully remove your tents by 3:00 pm today," the letter reads. "If you do not remove these tents, we will have to remove them and we cannot guarantee that your property will be

returned...It is our hope that there will be no arrests... We do not want to arrest you. We are hopeful that you will be respectful.”

At 3:00 pm, dozens of police officers began to march towards the encampment. Students linked arms around a handful of tents, but the police forced themselves through the line of students, throwing students onto the ground and violently jolting students from side to side.

As students continued to rush to the quad to support the protesters, police continued their assault. Two fire trucks were called by protesters to tend to the victims, many of whom were in severe pain.

After forcing the police to retreat, students unanimously passed a resolution calling for a mass action to be held on the quad this coming Monday. Many participants expect the turnout to be large.

“I think UCD just got radicalized,” Carla told the *World Socialist Web Site*. “We’re going to meet back here next week... I feel like we have to understand that this system is not set up to protect us—we have a human response to say, ‘that’s completely unjust’.”

“People who didn’t identify with the struggle will now. It’s pretty scary what happened today, and it’s waking up a lot of people.”

“Police are here to protect property, not people,” she added.

Fatima, a fellow student, commented further: “I saw so many students who normally don’t care out here chanting. When they saw their fellow students out here fighting, they saw that they must be fighting for something serious. I think there will be a student uproar on Monday. The entire campus could come out.”

Steve, a graduate student, declared: “We are the drum—the harder you beat us, the louder we’ll get.”



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