Massive police mobilization against Occupy Wall Street protesters

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Occupy protests on Thursday were met by a heavy police response nationwide. More than three hundred people were arrested, most of them in New York City, where protesters marked two months since the beginning of the occupation of Zuccotti Park in lower Manhattan.

The actions came two days after New York City's billionaire mayor, Michael Bloomberg, oversaw a military-style raid on the occupation encampment, involving hundreds of riot police, to forcibly remove the protesters. Moves to shut down the demonstrations have been coordinated by Democratic and Republican Party mayors nationwide, backed behind the scenes by the Obama administration.

As several hundred demonstrators swarmed into Manhattan's financial district Thursday morning, police in riot gear met them with drawn batons and metal barricades. Police corralled the protesters on the sidewalk and cordoned off the entire area, making it difficult if not impossible for many workers in the area to get into their buildings.

Witnesses reported that the NYPD used a Long Range Acoustic Device [LRAD], a "sonic cannon" crowd control weapon. The device emitted sharp sound bursts lasting a few seconds.

Around 2 pm, police closed off Zuccotti Park, preventing protesters from exiting or entering. A scuffle broke out over control of the barricades. Police pushed some protesters to the ground and seriously injured at least one demonstrator—reportedly with a baton strike to the head—in the process of retaking the park.

Police arrested approximately 180 protesters by the afternoon. Ten demonstrators and seven police officers were injured.

Later in the day, over 2,000 college students who had left classes to protest debt and tuition hikes joined Occupy protesters in Union Square. Students from the City University of New York demanded that tuition be abolished. Protesters broke though police barricades at various points and police attempted to prevent them from marching onto the streets.

The demonstration in Union Square then marched to Foley Square, where others joined them, including delegations organized by trade union officials, who attempted to promote the Democratic Party. The rally was notably smaller than a similar one in the same place on October 5 to protest the arrest of 700 protesters on Brooklyn Bridge four days earlier.

Protesters marched across the Brooklyn Bridge this time as well. Police arrested at least 80 as they sat down in the roadway of the bridge in an act civil disobedience.

Two months of protests against social inequality in the heart of the financial nerve center of American capitalism have unnerved the ruling circles and New York's political establishment. From the start, the demonstrators, who are opposed to the pervasive social inequality in American life, have been met by media lies and police intimidation.

The clearing of the occupation at Zuccotti Park on November 15 as well as the attacks on similar protests across the United States and the world is an indication of the fear in ruling circles that the protests could spark a broader movement in the working class.

Mayor Bloomberg spelled out this concern on Thursday. In an unscheduled appearance at a meeting of the Partnership for New York City, a right-wing association of business leaders, the mayor declared, "We're coming to a point where Occupy Wall Street is just the beginning, the Tea Party is just the beginning," he said. "The public is getting scared. They don't know what to do, and they're going to strike out, and they don't know where."

Another indication of the growing nervousness of the privileged layers of the establishment was the presence of the unions both at Foley Square and on the Brooklyn Bridge. The unions, which are gearing up to support the re-election bid of Obama and the pro-Wall Street Democratic Party, held a highly controlled demonstration.

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The same union executives who have feigned support for a movement against inequality—including AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka—are absolutely opposed to any mobilization of the working class against the corporate-backed assault on jobs, wages and benefits.

In addition to New York City, protests were held in Portland, Oregon; Los Angeles, California; Boston, Massachusetts; and other cities. Sympathy demonstrations were also held in several European cities.

In Los Angeles, about 250 protesters marched to an open-air plaza outside of a Bank of America Center, where they pitched about 10 tents. Approximately 400 police in full riot gear and dozens of black and white and undercover police cars surrounded the area. Five helicopters continuously buzzed overhead.

Police awaited the direction of the property owner, reportedly Brookfield Office Properties, which also owns Zuccotti Park in New York City. At 4:15 PM police ordered the remaining occupiers to disperse. Shortly thereafter police tore down the tents and arrested everyone who remained.

The arrests would not have occurred without the approval of Democratic Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to protesters at Union Square and Foley Square in New York City.

Anna, a New York University journalism student said, "I have been reporting on the Arab Spring since January from here. It seems like that world is far from ours, but the Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire in Tunisia seems so close to what people experience here with high student debts and no jobs. I grew up in a big Arab family, and they are experiencing the tragedy of unemployment like everyone else.

"I think Occupy Wall Street is similar to what has happened there. In Egypt you have the leader hoarding money from the people, while here it is the corporations hoarding money from the people. This is an international movement."

Devin, a student from Montclair State University in New Jersey, said, "People think they know what is going here but they don't really understand the real message. The message here is that everyone is equal and wants something fair. I saw a picture of people being boxed in in Zuccotti Park this morning. What is happening to freedom of speech?

"I saw the barricades on TV this morning. There were four rows of cops around Zuccotti Park. It's like the demonstration was a caged animal. The politicians are protecting their own interests, and the people are protecting our interests against them.

"I haven't seen politicians come out to defend Occupy Wall Street's right to exist and occupy at this time. The NYPD acted as the security force for Wall Street this morning. Now we have all seen it."

On the Obama administration, Devin added, "Obama approved 13 oil drilling permits right after the BP oils spill. He is the same as all of them. Anyone who is president would do the same thing. It shows that you have to change the system."

In Foley Square, Rosemary, a young worker and violin teacher, said, "I thought what happened at Zuccotti Park was disgusting. I didn't expect it. I think it is a typical response of a power system that doesn't care about the people. As long as we just go on consuming and working and not asking questions we are fine. But if we begin to speak up, we get nightsticks and beat up.

"I wouldn't be surprised if Obama sanctioned this. Because, contrary to popular opinion, he represents the banks and big business."

Ankita, a worker and teacher at the Rubin Museum, added, "Education should be free if it is necessary to succeed in life.

"What I would like to see is people of this generation taking responsibility to change the way the system works, to make it so it works for us and we can have legitimate lives. Our experience is not something we can use in our lives. Having a good life is not seen as real."

Kamala, a teacher in adult education in Harlem, was waiting for a friend before walking into the rally. "I came to be in solidarity. There is too much disparity, too much wealth being transferred between the good old boys, bankers, war-mongers. It is the same scenario over and over. Obama has done nothing."

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