

Occupy protesters face more arrests, threats to encampments

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As the Anti-Wall Street protests that began in New York City near the end of their second month, occupations in a number of cities continue to face police harassment, arrests and threats to their encampments. The protests began September 17 in New York City when protesters set up the Occupy Wall Street camp in Lower Manhattan.

In California, sheriff's deputies arrested nine Occupy Fresno protesters early Tuesday morning. Protesters have been camping in a city park for four weeks, but arrests began after their facility-use permit expired last week and a county ordinance banning use of the park between midnight and 6 a.m. took effect.

Tuesday's arrests followed arrests the two previous days. Eight protesters were arrested on Monday and 13 on Sunday. Protesters have vowed to remain at the park every night.

In Riverside, east of Los Angeles, 11 protesters were arrested near City Hall Sunday afternoon after several demonstrators refused police orders to remove their tents from the public plaza.

Protester Kathryn Stevenson, a teacher at Moreno Valley College, told the *Los Angeles Times*, "It got pretty violent out there—the cops were in riot gear." She said police had been warning the Occupy Riverside protesters since last Friday that they might move against the encampment. Protesters suspect city leaders fear the protest will disrupt the upcoming holiday light festival on the plaza.

In Tucson, Arizona, Occupy protesters have filed a lawsuit against the city, the Tucson Police Department, Republican Mayor Bob Walkup and members of the city council. Volunteer attorneys of the Occupy Tucson Legal Working Group have filed a civil rights suit in federal court asking "for a temporary restraining order to stop arrests at Veinte De Agosto Park," where

protesters have been camping out.

The attorneys represent more than 100 people who have been arrested since October 15, when Occupy Tucson protesters began their action, camping out at Armory Park, Veinte De Agosto Park and at the library plaza in downtown Tucson. City Attorney Mike Rankin responded Monday afternoon, "As to the lawsuit, the city's position remains unchanged. The codes we are enforcing comply with constitutional requirements and are enforceable."

Five people were arrested early morning Monday in Atlanta, Georgia near the downtown park that has been the site of the Occupy Atlanta protest. One protester was arrested inside Troy Davis Park (formerly Woodruff Park), while four others were arrested near the park—three for traffic violations and one for obstruction of a police officer.

The arrests came the day after 20 protesters were arrested in a late-night raid, when Democratic Mayor Kasim Reed ordered police in riot gear to move against protesters rallying around the park, which protesters had vowed to reoccupy. On October 26, 53 Occupy Atlanta protesters were arrested when police forcibly evicted them from the park in an early morning raid.

In a veiled threat against Occupy protesters, authorities in Washington DC have issued statements claiming protesters in the nation's capital have been "increasingly confrontational" and "aggressive." The statements follow incidents over the weekend in which three protesters were struck at a demonstration and a fourth was hit in a separate accident.

Police did not bring charges last Friday against the driver of a silver Lexus that struck three Occupy DC protesters, including a pregnant woman, outside an event for Americans for Prosperity, where protesters were demonstrating. After speaking with witnesses, DC

police concluded that the collision was unavoidable and the driver would not be charged.

On Monday, Occupy protesters called for a further investigation after they discovered a police report showing that a car of similar description was involved in a hit-and-run accident just prior to the other incident. Georgia Pearce, the woman hit, says she was attempting to block traffic but had not stepped in front of the approaching car. She said she was suffering from head trauma and “can’t even see straight.”

Later Monday, Police Chief Cathy Lanier issued a statement saying that while previous protests by Occupy DC had been peaceful, demonstrators have “become increasingly confrontational and violent toward uninvolved bystanders and motorists.” She claimed, “Demonstrators have also jeopardized the safety of their own children by using them in blockades.”

Mayor Vincent Gray issued a similar statement, saying that demonstrators have “turned more aggressive.” He added, “We will not tolerate behavior that jeopardizes public safety.”

In Philadelphia, Occupy DC protesters have been in negotiations with the city over alternate sites for their encampment, presently set up at Dilworth Plaza next to City Hall. If no agreement is reached, protesters face a possible showdown with city authorities, who are scheduled to begin a \$50 million renovation of the site this month.

Across Canada, Occupy protesters are facing numerous threats by city authorities to dismantle their camps, most of which were set up about three weeks ago. In Victoria, British Columbia, protesters rejected a notice of removal on Monday and marched to City Hall to deliver a letter of protest.

In Vancouver, BC, city authorities posted a notice demanding protesters leave their camp, citing a death on Saturday, drug-related infractions, sanitation and other hazards. The notice stated, “Staff have been directed to end the encampment in a way that can be done safely and peacefully while reserving the right to protest.” Protesters have vowed they will not leave voluntarily.

Protesters in Quebec City were told Monday to leave their camp, four days after city officials served an eviction notice, citing health and safety concerns. Police carried out a raid that same day, carrying away

firewood, tarps and other equipment.

In Halifax, Nova Scotia, Occupy protesters have made a deal with authorities to temporarily relocate their camp to allow city officials to organize Remembrance Day ceremonies at the city’s main war memorial.



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