

City of Boston shuts down Occupy encampment

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At about 5 a.m. Saturday morning, at least 100 Boston police officers swept into Dewey Square to shut down the Occupy Boston encampment, making 46 arrests and removing tents and other equipment. On Thursday, a Boston judge had lifted a temporary restraining order that had barred the city from moving against the group, clearing the way for city authorities to evict the protesters.

The protest in the city's financial district was one of the largest and longest running of the anti-Wall Street protests still in existence, having begun September 30, not long after the start of the protest in Lower Manhattan. In recent weeks, city administrations across the country have moved against numerous encampments, evicting protesters in often violent assaults by police and making thousands of arrests.

The Boston protesters had received a warning that they faced a midnight Thursday deadline for vacating the encampment, but authorities waited until early Saturday morning to act. A crowd of about 1,000 protesters and their supporters gathered in Dewey Square Thursday night in anticipation of the eviction, but the midnight deadline came and went without incident.

By the time of the Saturday morning raid, many of the protesters had left the camp, and organizers had removed much of the equipment, including kitchen facilities, the information tent, the library and other valuable material. When the raid began, some of the protesters were asleep in their tents, while others had stayed awake overnight in anticipation of the police action.

Boston police moved quickly, backing up police vans into the Dewey Square encampment. Police slashed

tents and began removing them along with other camp equipment. Witnesses reported that protesters were given the opportunity to leave the camp on their own accord and avoid arrest, and a number of them chose to do so.

Many of those who remained resisted by locking arms and were carried away by police to waiting police vans, bound by plastic handcuffs. Of the 46 arrests made over an approximately two-hour period, most were for trespassing and some were for resisting arrest. Most of those arrested were released on \$40 bail later that day.

An account on the Occupy Boston web site noted that a concerted effort was made to keep the media from covering the raid at close distance, and there is limited video footage of the arrests:

“Credentialed press, citizen journalists, academic researchers, and #OccupyBoston media members were repeatedly corralled and moved to surrounding areas 50 feet away or more, prohibiting many from thoroughly covering the raid. From pointing lights in photographers' lenses to targeting the two official #OccupyBoston USTREAM live videographers for removal, officials went to great lengths to block media access.”

City authorities made much of the reportedly nonviolent nature of the police assault. Police did not dress in riot gear, no tear gas or pepper-spray was used, and there were no reported injuries. At a press conference Saturday following the raid, Mayor Thomas Menino, a Democrat, praised the police for acting with “patience and respect.”

The *Boston Globe* reported that as police officers sliced through tents, collapsed them, and cleared the camp, Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis commented of the protesters, “They have some very

valuable ideas that need to be talked about more.”

Throughout the Boston protest, city and state authorities have worked to bring the social discontent expressed by the protests under their control. This has involved a two-pronged approach: on the one hand feigning support for the protesters, while on the other moving deliberately to see it eventually shut down.

Democratic Party officials responsible for slashing budgets, closing down schools and attacking public sector workers have claimed to sympathize with protesters’ grievances. Two weeks into the protest, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick requested and was granted a tour of the tent city. Patrick, a millionaire, said he had come to gain a “better understanding” of the group and indicated he was impressed with the encampment’s operation.

Following last Saturday’s raid on the camp, Mayor Menino said of the protesters, “They shined a much-needed light, still needed, on the growing economic inequality in this country.” The *Globe* reports that soon after the occupation began, the mayor called Police Commissioner Davis, telling him, “I don’t want the area looking like a police state. I don’t want the protesters looking like they’re being held captive.”

However, less than two weeks into the protests, after the group had expanded their camp to an adjacent section of the greenway, city authorities ordered an early morning raid, arresting more than 140 people. Police in riot gear, wielding batons and using attack dogs, knocked protesters to the ground and hauled them away. Among those arrested were Veterans for Peace members along with representatives of the media and legal observers.

Mayor Menino and other city officials have repeatedly cited health and safety concerns as reasons why the protest should be shut down and have vigorously argued their case in court. In advance of a November 30 hearing to reconsider a restraining order that barred the city from evicting the protesters, city attorneys prepared a 200-page legal document outlining what they claimed were health and fire hazards.

The judge’s eventual ruling that cleared the way for the city to raid the encampment declared that occupying public land is a “hostile act” that is not protected under the First Amendment. Judge Frances A. McIntyre wrote

that the occupiers “appear[ed] ready to defend their turf,” in essence arguing that any police action against it constituted self-defense. She also made the ludicrous suggestion that the occupiers could legally camp on the Harbor Islands, which are only accessible by boat.

Rather than fight for broader working-class support for the fight against social inequality and the domination of financial interests over all aspects of life, protest organizers continually appealed to Mayor Menino to be reasonable and allow them to continue operating their encampment.

The protesters also maintained a consistently chummy relationship with the cops stationed at the camp. According to the *Globe*, Police Superintendent Williams Evans “gave his cellphone number to a few of the occupiers who were emerging as quiet leaders” among the protesters.

The remarks of one young protester who was at Dewey Square when the final police raid took place are indicative of the politics promoted by liberal and pseudo-left forces who have come to play a role in Occupy Boston and other anti-Wall Street protests. Speaking to the local media, Mike Hipson referred to Barack Obama’s speech in Kansas last week, in which the president, who had overseen an unprecedented transfer of wealth to the banks, cynically spoke about rising income inequality, as “the defining issue of our time.” (See: “Obama plays the populist card”)

“He’s using our rhetoric because it’s striking a chord with people,” Hipson was quoted by the *Globe*. “That’s the success of the Occupy movement. We’re changing the dialogue. And we’re affecting every single person who walked through this camp and stayed longer than they expected.”

In the name of “no politics,” there has been a calculated effort by many of those with influence in the Occupy movement to channel the enormous anger that has been demonstrated in the weeks-long protests behind the Democratic Party and the reelection of Obama.



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