

Police arrest 29 Occupy Tampa protesters

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Police in Florida arrested 29 Occupy Tampa protesters Thursday night in the latest move against the Occupy protests nationwide. Around 100 members of the Tampa group held a march and then assembled in Riverfront Park at around 10 p.m., with the intention of setting up camp and sleeping there overnight.

Tampa police informed the protesters that the park was closed to the public at that time and ordered them to leave. After police gave several warnings, about 20 people voluntarily left the park. The remaining protesters were told they would be arrested and charged with trespassing if they did not vacate the park.

When the remaining protesters were approached by police, 27 of them passively resisted and were arrested. A news release from Tampa Police Department spokesperson Laura McElroy insisted that the 27 were arrested “without any physical confrontation or violence.”

Two additional individuals were arrested when they left a group of about 30 who were gathered on the sidewalk surrounding the park, walked into the park, and then refused to leave. The arrests were the largest since the Occupy Tampa protest began some two months ago. In late October, six people were arrested in a similar peaceful protest.

On Tuesday, the group had drawn up a proposal asking the city to designate a place no more than one mile from city hall where they could set up an overnight camp. They had sent invitations for an open talk with Mayor Bob Buckhorn, a Democrat, and city council members. The Thursday night raid was the city’s response to protesters’ request for a democratic discussion.

The arrests in Tampa follow a wave of violence in recent days against the Occupy protests nationwide as city administrations move to shut down the protests. Many of the most brutal actions have taken place by police under the direction of Democratic Party mayors,

and reportedly have been coordinated with the Obama administration’s Department of Homeland Security and the FBI.

Early morning Wednesday, Los Angeles police, many in riot gear and armed with rubber bullets, shut down Occupy Los Angeles and made nearly 300 arrests. The raid was directed by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, a Democrat and former union bureaucrat. Also on Wednesday, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, another Democrat, oversaw a police raid against occupiers in that city, leading to 52 arrests.

The Occupy protests—motivated by opposition to growing social inequality and the domination of the banks and financial institutions over all aspects of life—were first inspired by the Occupy Wall Street protest in Lower Manhattan. That protest was shut down in a brutal police operation on November 15.

In other developments Thursday, police arrested three protesters at the Occupy Boston camp. The arrests that evening followed a judge’s ruling earlier that day temporarily extending a restraining order barring the city from evicting the protesters from their Dewey Square encampment. Judge Frances A. McIntyre indicated she will make a final ruling by December 15.

Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, a Democrat, has made no secret of his desire to see the camp—one of the oldest and largest protests in the US still remaining—shut down and the protesters evicted. Under the temporary injunction, city officials can move against the encampment if they claim it poses an immediate threat to health or public safety.

The three Occupy Boston protesters arrested Thursday were charged with disorderly conduct after dozens of people surrounded a police patrol wagon that was attempting to remove a kitchen sink police had confiscated from the camp. Authorities have banned the protesters from bringing in any items that they claim could be used to convert the tent city into a permanent

dwelling, including construction materials.

At a court hearing on the injunction on Thursday, attorneys for the city stated, “Nothing in the First Amendment allows tying the city’s hand from enforcing applicable fire, health, inspection codes, criminal statutes, and guidelines that govern the use of the Greenway.” The city presented the court with a 200-page legal document outlining alleged health and fire hazards posed by the tent city.

So while citing the encampment for violations of the health and fire code, they are now taking a much more hardline approach to protesters’ efforts to bring in items—such as sinks and material to winterize tents—that would actually improve camp conditions.



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