

New York City police arrest another 68 Occupy Wall Street protesters

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On New Year's Eve New York City police arrested dozens of people, including passersby, during an Occupy Wall Street demonstration in Manhattan.

The arrests came after several hundred protesters assembled in Zuccotti Park in lower Manhattan to protest the gross social inequality in the US and the police-state-like handling of their encampment, which was disbanded on the orders New York's billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg on November 15.

Protesters had occupied the small public area in Manhattan's financial district on September 17 to draw attention to the domination of the super-rich in American political and social life.

The occupation and the numerous planned and spontaneous marches that it sponsored were met by escalating police harassment over the course of the next two months. This included resurrecting an old unused law against covering one's face in public, mass arrests—including over 700 on the Brooklyn Bridge on October 1—gratuitous pepper spraying, routine kettling of protesters, and the use of special crowd dispersal equipment.

The action at Zuccotti Plaza sparked similar occupations of public spaces around the US and internationally that articulated the frustration and anger that hundreds of millions of people feel about high unemployment, declining wages, cuts in social programs and pensions, and the domination of the economy by a tiny oligarchy of billionaires and multi-millionaires.

On Saturday at about 10:30 p.m. protesters moved into Zuccotti Park, which remains open 24 hours a day, though under heavy police supervision.

Protesters carried a large Occupy Wall Street banner and broadcast a "bat signal" spotlight on nearby building that read "the 99 %". They chanted, "Whose

year? Our year!"

At approximately 11:00 p.m., protesters began removing the metal police barricades that surround the plaza and piling them up inside the brick-surfaced park. Police officers engaged in a tug-of-war in some cases but ultimately were unable to keep the fences intact. Individual protesters who removed the barricades retreated into the crowd, which shielded them from arrest.

Police charged into the crowd at one point and conducted arrests but were unable to disperse the crowd. Police used pepper spray on some protesters. Officers from the New York Police Department's (NYPD) notorious TARU unit videotaped the protesters.

An NYPD officer harassed actress Ellen Barkin, who was walking home as the protest was occurring. Her companion videotaped the event. After witnessing some of the arrests, Barkin posted the following on the microblogging site Twitter: "I have never been afraid of a NY policeman until last nite. What I saw was random & senseless arrests & threatening behavior."

She said that she was confronted by police after attempting to go to the aid of a young woman who was screaming for help after being arrested while merely walking by the protest.

One protester, Jason Amadi, told *USA Today*: "They (police) got very aggressive and started pushing people and pepper-spraying people. I got pepper-sprayed in the face."

As the crowd dwindled by 1:30 a.m., police and security guards hired by Brookfield Properties, which owns the plaza, entered the area and began to shove those who remained inside. The *New York Times* reported, "One officer used two hands to repeatedly shove backwards a credentialed news photographer

who was preparing to document an arrest.” Police announced that the park was closed until 9 a.m. It remained closed on Jan. 1.

A smaller group left the plaza shortly before it was cleared and marched uptown. Police arrested about 50 of these protesters at 2nd Avenue and 13 St. The total number of arrests was reported at 68, virtually all of them for the NYPD’s standard charges against demonstrators: disorderly conduct, trespassing and obstructing government administration.



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