

Hundreds arrested in police crackdown on Oakland protests

Jack Hood
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Hundreds of police clad in riot gear and wielding a variety of weapons attacked a procession of protesters in Oakland, California, on Saturday. It was the largest altercation between police and protesters in Oakland since the October 25 confrontation that left several wounded, including Iraq War veteran Scott Olsen.

In order to contain the crowd of between 1,000 and 2,000 protesters, the City of Oakland mobilized police and sheriff departments across the San Francisco Bay Area. More than 400 protesters were arrested over the course of the evening, with marches continuing late into the night.

Police used rubber bullets, flash bangs, smoke grenades, bean bag guns, batons, and tear gas to suppress the demonstration. Images of children wearing tear-gas masks surfaced in the wake of the demonstrations, and one woman was reportedly shot in the back from point-blank range by a police officer. (Video from the day is collected [here](#)).

A 19 year-old woman was hospitalized for internal bleeding, though her condition remained unknown as of Sunday morning. A handful of journalists were amongst those arrested.

In ominous remarks, Oakland City Council member Ignacio De La Fuente declared in response to the protests, “It’s an escalation that in my opinion, basically amounts to domestic terrorism where people start taking buildings and costing the city an incredible amount of resources.”

Saturday’s march was part of a day-of-action that Occupy Oakland organizers had called “Move-In Day”. At 1 pm, demonstrators left Oscar Grant Plaza for the Henry Kaiser Convention Center, a long-vacant auditorium with over 5,000 seats and one of many

empty buildings in economically devastated Oakland. Occupy organizers planned to turn the empty building into a community center with space for the homeless.

A series of separate confrontations and police attacks occurred in various parts of Downtown Oakland throughout the day.

As the original mid-day demonstration arrived at the Kaiser Convention Center, police began firing tear gas and flash grenades into the crowd. Demonstrators responded by taking down the fences that surrounded the abandoned building, and the police responded with another volley of attacks.

Some protesters—members of the anarchist “black block”—retaliated with rocks, bottles, and other small projectiles. The police managed to push the large crowd away from the abandoned convention center, making several arrests and continuing to fire rubber bullets, bean bags, flash grenades, and smoke bombs into the retreating crowd.

Saturday’s demonstrations were more heavily-dominated by “black-block” anarchistic tendencies than earlier demonstrations in Oakland. Their bankrupt politics has often in the past coincided with infiltration by police with the aim of creating a provocation to be used to justify mass arrests. The mid-day demonstration was organized in part by a faction of anarchists within the Bay Area Occupy movement that calls itself “Bay of Rage”.

At around 5 pm, protesters re-grouped and began to march down Broadway. Disregarding the protesters’ First Amendment rights, the police encircled marchers from two sides—reportedly using dozens of 10-seater vans to move throughout the downtown streets. They cordoned off the nearby streets and attempted to “kettle” hundreds of protesters. Protesters managed to avoid mass arrests by retreating back up Broadway. At

this time, a second kettling attempt was made on the corner of Broadway and 24th Street.

In an attempt to avoid getting trapped amidst the barrage of police projectiles, an estimated 300 protesters took shelter in a YMCA building. Police surrounded the building and made mass arrests, converting local public AC Transit buses into jail transports.

At roughly the same time, a group of demonstrators broke into Oakland City Hall and burned two American flags. Nearly every local newspaper ran a photo of this incident alongside their coverage of the demonstrations.

The scale of police repression, called in by the Democratic Party which dominates Bay Area politics, highlights the contempt that the ruling class has for constitutionally guaranteed rights.

Democratic Mayor Jean Quan, who ordered the earlier police raid that led to the injury of Olsen, responded to claims of police violence by declaring: “The residents of Oakland are wearying of the constant focus and cost to our city... the Bay Area Occupy movement has got to stop using Oakland as their playground.”

The local press focused their reporting on the negative impact of the demonstrations on the City of Oakland, echoing claims made by the police that the added presence in Downtown Oakland on Saturday prevented the police from responding to emergency phone calls throughout the day: “Oakland police had to ignore 200 lower priority calls for service Saturday night...because resources were tied up with the Occupy protests.”

It is apparent, though, that the Oakland Police Department did not *have to* deny service to anyone—they merely chose to. In fact, the decision by the police to focus resources on repressing demonstrators is a conscious expression of the priorities of the police, the state, and the financial aristocrats, who care more about protecting private property and an abandoned building than they do about the well-being of the people of Oakland.



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