

Mass police mobilization in cities around the world during New Year's Eve celebrations

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The repressive forces of federal, state and local police were mobilized on Sunday evening during New Year celebrations in cities across the globe.

Armies of uniformed and plainclothes officers, as well as military personnel, were placed on high alert and stationed in and around crowds gathered to mark the arrival of 2024. Drones were used for fly-overs to study “crowd anomalies” on the pretext that the surveillance was needed to keep people safe.

In many locations, New Year's Eve celebrants were confronted with police in riot gear and armed with high-powered assault rifles and other military hardware. In others, celebrations were banned altogether.

On Friday, CNN summed up government justifications for the preparation of mass repression: “Authorities across the US are working to ensure New Year's revelers' security this weekend, particularly in New York, where law enforcement officials say the war in Gaza has contributed to the concern of lone-wolf attacks, though they stress there is ‘no specific reporting regarding any threats.’”

In other words, even though no specific threats exist, the months-long US-backed genocide of Palestinians by the Israeli military—which has killed an estimated 30,000 people, most of whom are women and children—is being used as a pretext to condition the public for heavily armed police presence whenever and wherever large crowds assemble.

Aware of the widespread anger and opposition to Israeli war crimes in Gaza, the ruling powers internationally are sending a signal that mass expressions of pro-Palestinian sympathy and demands for an end to the genocide will continue to be met with swift attacks on the right to free speech and peaceful assembly in 2024.

The following is a survey of the police presence and actions in select cities around the globe on December 31:

Sydney, Australia: Among the first celebrations in the

world took place in Sydney, where the New South Wales (NSW) Police Force launched its largest operation in all of 2023. The mobilization, dubbed “Operation New Year's Eve 2023,” included the participation of “multiple police area commands and districts across the State.” These forces were to be assisted by “Traffic and Highway Patrol Command, Police Transport Command, the Public Order and Riot Squad, Operations Support Group, Licensing Police, Mounted and Dog Command, Marine Area Command, and PolAir,” according to an official NSW press release.

With more than 1 million people turning out for fireworks that lit up the night sky over the Sydney Harbor Bridge, the police operations commander, Commissioner Anthony Cooke, said hundreds of uniformed and plain-clothed officers were deployed around foreshore areas, “targeting those engaging in dangerous and anti-social behavior throughout the night.”

Mumbai, India: More than 15,000 policemen, “including personnel from the state reserve police force (SRPF) and quick response teams (QRTs),” were deployed across the city “to prevent any untoward incidents” during the New Year's Eve celebrations, according to the *Hindustan Times*. The report also said that 5,000 surveillance cameras “installed at strategic points and important junctions will help the officials monitor the streets.”

The police set up “nakabandi,” or checkpoints, where police have the authority of stop and search “at 121 crucial points across the city, including the entry and exit points.” The report said, “Several policemen and women will be in civil clothes around crowded places, to prevent any untoward incidents and for women's safety. Anti-Terrorism Cell (ATC) officials will keep a watchful eye on suspicious movements and persons in their areas and anti-sabotage measures will be taken against suspicious persons.”

Istanbul, Turkey: A statement by the Provincial Police Department said some roads in Istanbul’s central district would be closed as part of “necessary precautions” ahead of New Year’s Eve. In a post on Twitter/X, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya wrote that 38,222 military personnel, 5,552 vehicles and 265 drones would be deployed to meet the New Year with “peace and security.” He also said the “safety” presence would include 167,739 personnel, 178 aircraft, 86 marine vessels and 400 detector dogs across the country.

Berlin, Germany: The Associated Press reported 4,500 police officers patrolled the streets on Sunday night, “the strongest police presence Berlin witnessed in decades.” Police banned the use of traditional firecrackers across the city, the AP report said, and police arrested 390 people near Alexanderplatz for “violating the Weapons and Explosives Act.” Iris Springer, senator for interior, digitalization and sport in the Berlin state government, posted on Twitter/X that it took “months” of preparations by the police to be ready for New Year’s celebrations.

Paris, France: Government officials announced 90,000 law enforcement officers would be deployed across France on New Year’s Eve, with 6,000 of those in Paris. Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said that due to a “very high terrorist threat” because, in part, of “what is happening in Israel and Palestine,” police would use drones for the first time as part of the security operations that included tens of thousands of firefighters and 5,000 soldiers. No political demonstrations would be allowed, according to Paris police chief Laurent Nuñez and people were to be body-searched before being allowed entry to the festivities’ perimeter around the Champs-Élysées. On Monday, Interior Minister Darmanin reported 380 arrests were made nationwide.

London, UK: Scotland Yard said it would have an “extensive policing operation” in place during the New Year’s Eve celebrations in London. A report by the *i* newspaper said the Metropolitan Police had called on the public to be “extra eyes and ears in terms of vigilance” to assist officers, “although there is understood to be no specific threat and the UK terror threat level remains unchanged at ‘substantial’—the third highest on the five-tier alert scale.” The report continued, “MI5 has warned in recent weeks that the domestic terror threat could rise as a result of the Gaza conflict, although the danger is believed to come from so-called ‘lone actors’ likely to have been radicalized online.”

New York City: On Friday, New York Governor Kathy

Hochul said the area in and around the Times Square ball drop would be surrounded by heightened security measures from the state police force and the New York National Guard. The *New York Times* reported that “police will be monitoring an expanded area in Manhattan with canine units and officers on horseback. Helicopters and boats will be deployed. Drones will hover along the outer perimeter of the security zone to monitor potential protests in real time, Assistant Commissioner Kaz Daughtry said.”

New York City Mayor Eric Adams said at a news conference on Friday, “We will be out here with our canines, on horseback, our helicopters, our boats. The full complement of our public safety apparatus will be on display.”

The FBI released a public service announcement earlier in December stating the “threat of violence likely heightened throughout winter,” without providing any specifics. The alert said that “ongoing tensions related to the conflict between Israel and HAMAS likely heighten the threat of lone actor violence targeting large public gatherings throughout the winter, including holiday-related, faith-based, New Year’s Eve, and First Amendment protected events related to the conflict.”

The statement also said, “Although this announcement is not in response to any specific plotting activity, these targets likely remain attractive to lone actors inspired by a range of ideologies due to their accessibility and symbolic nature.”



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