

Hong Kong: Police end Admiralty sit-in, but students vow to fight on, predicting a 'second wave of occupation'

247 arrested in peaceful end to Hong Kong's Occupy protests after 75 days of turmoil

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The police ended the main sit-in of the Occupy movement in Admiralty yesterday with the arrest of 247 people, including politicians, student leaders and a pop star. Traffic through the area resumed 75 days after the occupation started.

However, student leaders vowed to continue their prodemocracy cause in other ways after Christmas.

Monitored by members of the police watchdog and more than 200 local and international journalists, the seven-hour police operation proceeded without any clashes between officers and protesters, unlike in the clearance operation in Mong Kok.

By 11pm, all traffic on Harcourt Road had resumed.

Police cordoned off the camp along Harcourt Road at 2.20pm, after court bailiffs cleared the roads covered by an injunction which applied to one-fifth of the area. By that time, more than 100 protesters had started a sit-in on the road, waiting to be arrested.

Speaking at the sit-in before he was arrested, Federation of Students secretary general Alex Chow Yong-kang said: "I would not say ... the movement ends with victory, but I don't think we have failed either."

He expected a "second wave of occupation" would happen in the coming months, when people protest at public forums during the second stage of public consultation on political reform.

Other sit-in participants included Democratic Party founding chairman Martin Lee Chu-ming, Apple Daily boss Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, Canto-pop singer Denise Ho Wan-see and nine members of the federation.

There were also ordinary citizens like Au Yeung Siu-hung, 67, who had been protesting in Admiralty every day over the past two months. Au said he was there to "fulfil the spirit of civil disobedience by shouldering the legal consequences" - in the words of the three Occupy Central founders who turned themselves in to police last week.

A government spokesman said the occupation was a "severe blow to the economy, politics, society and people's livelihood".

He expressed "gratitude" to the police force for their hard work, while urging the public to abide by the law in expressing their views in future. Executive councillors made the same appeal in a joint statement.

Lester Shum, Chow's deputy, said the clearance would not mark an end to their fight for genuine universal suffrage.

"I believe what the government has lost is not only the support of young people, but also Hongkongers," he said as he gathered with dozens outside Kwai Chung police station last night, where the first batch of those arrested were being held.

About 7,000 officers were deployed in two shifts for the clearance operation, and 909 protesters who left voluntarily after the area was sealed off at 2.20pm had their details taken. A police source said the remaining Occupy site in Causeway Bay would probably be cleared next week as the priority was to make sure that Admiralty was not reoccupied.

Some owners of businesses near the Occupy camp and workers affected by traffic jams expressed relief, while worrying that protesters would return.

Chung Kim-wah, director of Polytechnic University's Centre for Social Policy Studies, said Leung Chun-ying's administration would not find governance easier despite the end of Occupy, which he added had "torn society apart".

Staff Reporters

Danny Lee, Emily Tsang, Phila Siu, Jennifer Ngo, Joyce Ng, Peter So, Alan Yu, Samuel Chan, Clifford Lo and Timmy Sung

P.S.

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