

Korea Indimedia

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## **Seoul: Movement Against Police Repression and Forced Eviction**

Seoul, South Korea. Saturday January 31, solidarity demonstration was held at CheongGyeCheon stream resistance to the Seoul Metropolitan Government's 'redevelopment' program. Riot police surrounded the demonstration and attempted to isolate about 10,000 demonstrators by the CheongGyeCheon stream in order to prevent an expected march to MyungDong.

The demonstration began at 4 pm at the CheongGyeCheon stream near city hall where a small stage was set up for speakers, poets and musicians. Riot police tried to close off the area by parking large police buses in lines around both sides of the street, which intensified peoples' frustration. The police made several attempts to enter the street, but were blocked and pushed back by demonstrators. The police eventually brought a water cannon close to the demonstration and threatened to spray the crowd, announcing into a loudspeaker that the demonstration was illegal.

Around 7 pm, the demonstrators took an alternative marching route to get outside of police confinement. The march took over the streets and continued toward MyungDong, passing huge lines of parked police buses along the way.

Upon reaching MyungDong, large squads of riot police began blocking the march with lines of police buses parked behind them.

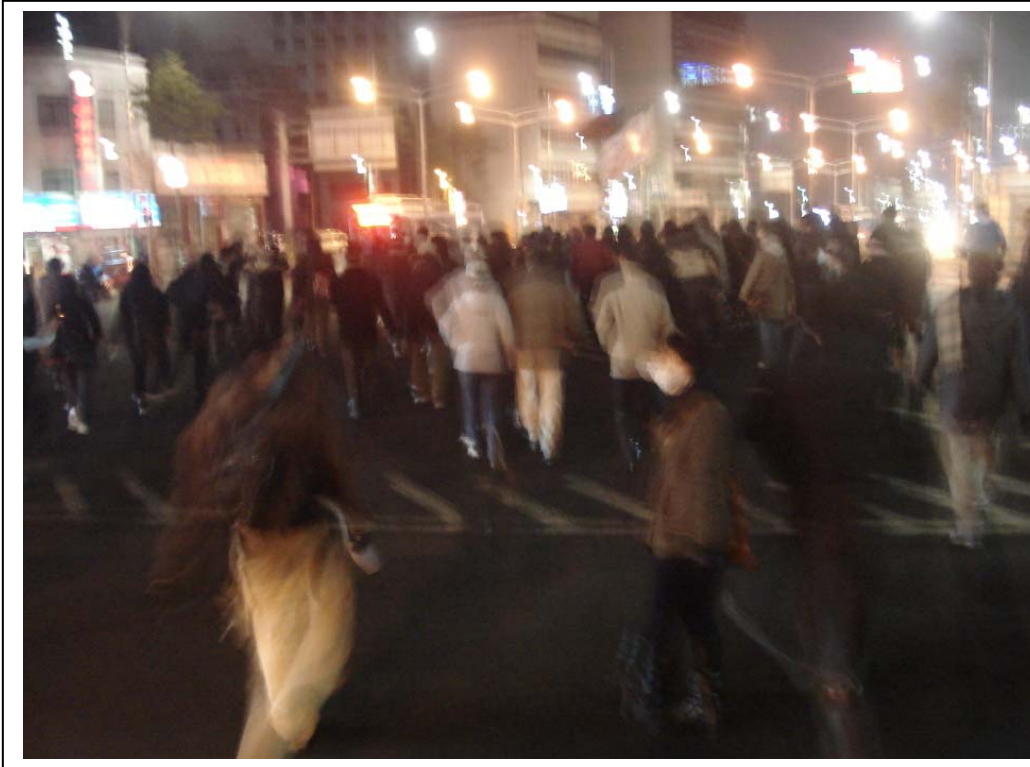
Once again, police surrounded the demonstrators and closed them into a confined area. Some police were video taping and photographing the crowd with cameras. Demonstrators struggled to keep the streets for hours, but police continued to shove and beat the crowd toward the sidewalk, eventually opening one side of the street to traffic. Around 9 pm, the police started beating people more intensely until the demonstrators split up and left the scene.

On Sunday February 1, 4 pm, another demonstration was held at CheongGyeCheon, in which about 10,000 people attended. The crowd marched to MyungDong and were followed by police, like the day before. Demonstrators marched through the streets of MyungDong chanting against the government, demanding president Lee Myung Bak

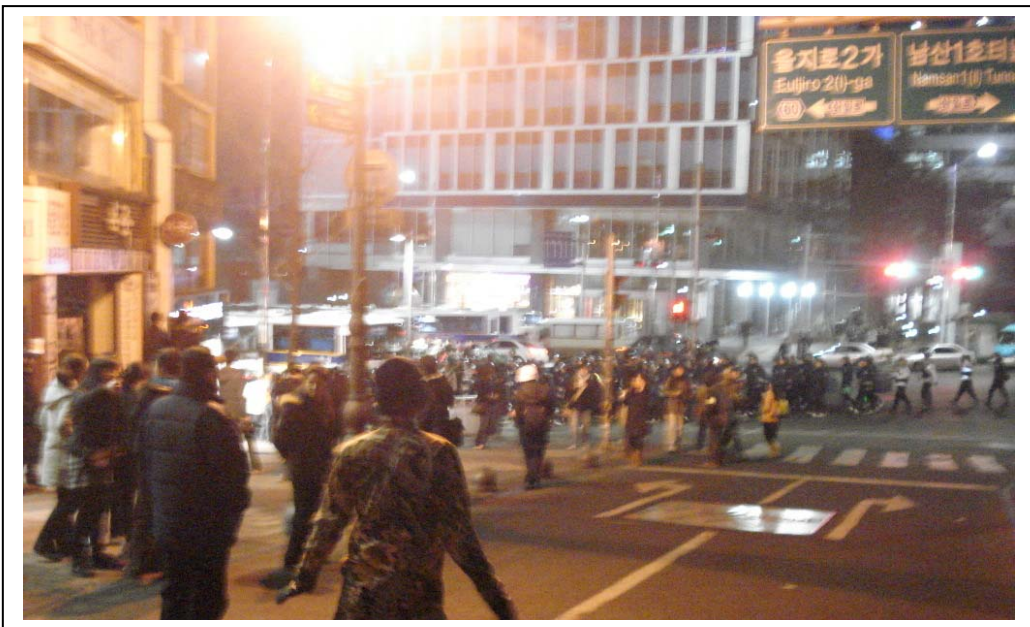
resign from office, no more police repression, cancellation of the redevelopment program, no more forced evictions and give people freedom.



Around 9:30 pm, demonstrators marched into the streets toward ChungMooRo subway station, at which the crowd was surrounded by police and threatened with arrest.



The demonstrators split up and took different routes back to the MyungDong cathedral, at which about 600 demonstrators remained. Police eventually surrounded the cathedral, trapping demonstrators near the cathedral entrance. The crowd split up and left the scene around midnight.



These demonstrations began after police created a deadly fire during a raid that killed 5 demonstrators and 1 police officer in a building being occupied by sit-in demonstrators in Yongsan, Seoul, on December 19. The sit-in was demonstrating resistance to the redevelopment program and the consequential policy of forced evictions carried out by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, police and private militias hired by corporations such as Samsung and Posco. The Korean SWAT team attacked at 6 am on December 19, spraying water cannons into the building which caused a serious fire by spreading paint thinner throughout the building.



Demonstrators claim that the police are responsible for the deaths, the redevelopment program should be abolished, and president Lee should resign from office. As police continue to brutally repress these demonstrations, people's anger and frustrations continue to grow. Police repression is one of the main problems to which demonstrators are expressing opposition. A wide variety of groups are taking part in the demonstrations, ranging from democratic party politicians, the National Evictee Alliance, students, civic groups, buddhist monks and anarchist collectives. So far, the demonstrations have faced intense police repression and haven't yet made any concrete accomplishments due to the government and corporations responsible for the redevelopment program ignoring these demonstrations. The mainstream media conglomerates haven't been giving much

attention to the demonstrations and people's demands. In accordance, there have been no signs of these demonstrations coming to a stop.

