

# 'OCCUPY' PROTESTS AT FINANCIAL CRISIS GO WORLDWIDE

BBC News



*Protests at financial mismanagement and government cutback have been held in cities around the world.*

Clashes erupted at the biggest rally, in Rome, when riot police intervened after a small group of masked militants attacked property.

Police used tear gas, water cannon and baton-charges, making several arrests.

Inspired by the Occupy Wall St movement and Spain's "Indignants", demonstrators turned out from Asia to Europe, but numbers were generally small.

Organisers expect rallies in 82 countries, with the protests due to come full circle when they reach New York.

Organisers said on their website that the aim was to "initiate the global change we want".

"United in one voice, we will let politicians, and the financial elites they serve, know it is up to us, the people, to decide our future," it said.

### Masked militants

Tens of thousands of people had turned out to demonstrate peacefully in Rome, the BBC's David Willey reports.

Television pictures from the city showed streets packed with protesters waving banners, close to the Colosseum.

However militants dressed in black infiltrated the crowd and

began attacking property. Offices belonging to the Italian defence ministry were set on fire, three cars were burnt and there were attacks on cash dispensers and bank and shop windows.

Police moved in after bottles were reportedly thrown at them.

The militants were also challenged by other protesters, our correspondent says. "No to violence!" they shouted and tried to restrain them.

At least one person was injured during the protests.

There was a message of support for the global day of protest from the

chief of the Bank of Italy, Mario Draghi, who is set to take over as head of the European Central Bank (ECB) next month.

"Young people are right to be indignant," he was quoted by Italian media as saying in informal comments at the G20 summit in Paris.

"They're angry against the world of finance. I understand them... We adults are angry about the crisis. Can you imagine people who are in their twenties or thirties?"

Outside the ECB itself in Frankfurt, Germany, thousands of people gathered to protest on Saturday.

A 27-year-old schoolteacher who gave his name only as Tobias told AFP news agency: "I see the global capitalist system as a time bomb for humans but also for the planet.

"Our well-being is financed to the detriment of other countries, [and] the ECB represents this unjust and murderous system."

### **Evening rally**

At least 1,000 people demonstrated in London's financial district but were prevented by police from reaching the Stock Exchange.

In Dublin, about 400 people marched to a hotel where an EU/IMF/ECB delegation involved in the country's ongoing financial bailout is staying, the Irish Times reports.

Crowds have started to gather in central Madrid, waiting for eight separate columns to converge from all over the city, the BBC's Sarah Rainsford reports from the Spanish capital.

People of all ages, from pensioners to children, and many of the young unemployed, have gathered for the evening rally on Puerta del Sol Square, where the "Indignant" movement was launched in May.

Most of Saturday's other rallies have been small, with traffic barely disrupted.

Hundreds of people marched in New Zealand cities while in Sydney, Australia, some 2,000 people - including representatives of Aboriginal groups, communists and trade unionists - rallied outside the central Reserve Bank of Australia.

"Occupy" protests were also been held in South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

It remains to be seen if any of the demonstrations turn into protest camps, such as Occupy Wall Street, which began with a small group of activists in New York's financial district a couple of months ago and has now grown to include several thousand people at times, from many walks of life.

Observers say that, while the original protesters in Spain had concrete demands such as seeking a cut in working hours to tackle unemployment, many "Occupy" protesters are vague in their demands.

## D I S C U S S I O N

**In your opinion, how effective are protests such as the one read above? Would you ever participate in a protest of this magnitude in order to fight for your ideals? Why (not)?**