

# Wave of Action protests becoming a common sight on Phoenix's streets



Megan Cassidy, The Republic | [azcentral.com](http://azcentral.com)

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(Photo: Nick Oza/The Republic)

Two weeks ago, the Wave of Action's [anti-police-brutality march at Civic Space Park](http://story/news/local/phoenix/2014/10/26/phoenix-police-brutality-protest-ends-clash/17967505/) culminated in a flurry of hurled protester flags, police pepper-spray balls and six arrests. The group's demonstration against capitalism at Cesar Chavez Memorial Plaza on Nov. 1 drew a thinner crowd and produced just one arrest.

On Wednesday, participants of the Phoenix group marched in downtown Phoenix to [protest a host of issues](http://story/news/local/phoenix/2014/11/05/phoenix-anonymous-masked-march-brk/18572503/), ranging from genetically modified foods to police brutality to government corruption.

Dozens of police officers tailed the Phoenix arm of Wednesday's "Million-Mask March" on bicycle or monitored the group via watch posts, but the event went peacefully.

The group's philosophy is nebulous, but its demonstrations tend to follow a common narrative: Events are publicized on social media, attended by mostly masked 20-somethings and shadowed by a heavy police presence.

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Depending on whom you ask, [Wave of Action](https://www.facebook.com/wavemaydayphx/info) is either a tribute, an affiliate, an offshoot or a knockoff of networks such as the hacktivist group Anonymous or the Occupy movement. Even within Phoenix, memberships in what some call anarchist groups themselves are fluid, with various similar-themed organizations continuously appearing and dissipating.

"Someone asked me what their cause was, and I said, 'I'm glad I'm not their spokesman,'" said Sgt. Trent Crump, a Phoenix police spokesman.

Phoenix police's community-response squad and the department's Homeland Defense Bureau have for years monitored similar movements on social media.

Crump said the group seems to be bent on disrupting the downtown area and prefers to have an audience. The Oct. 25 anti-police-brutality protest coincided with the city's annual Zombie Walk festival, which drew more than 10,000 attendees.

The Nov. 1 event posed less of a threat, Crump said, because there were no large-scale events downtown that day. But police noticed that one of the members was provoking others, calling for participants to attend the event armed.

Seven have been arrested recently — six at the anti-police-brutality rally for charges including failure to obey police and obstructing a public thoroughfare, and one at the anti-capitalism event for an outstanding warrant from Peoria Municipal Court.

Police said the Oct. 25 event started peacefully enough but soon became a public nuisance when marchers began entering the roadway, obstructing traffic and disregarding orders from police.

Alexander Kennedy, one of those arrested Oct. 25, said police presence was thin at the movement's earlier marches against police brutality, which have been happening since the Aug. 9 police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.

He said it's only been since the media spotlight on Ferguson has dimmed that Phoenix police began boosting their presence at Wave of Action events. Kennedy said he's been targeted by police due to his involvement in Phoenix's Occupy movement.

Kennedy said he was the only one in his group that was arrested.



**Protesters take a break Wednesday evening in downtown Phoenix.** (Photo: Megan Cassidy/The Republic)

"It was like, 'This guy's an organizer, a known agitator,'" he said.

Crump said the police don't believe the group is necessarily dangerous, but an inconvenience that diverts manpower from other areas of the city.

The group's Facebook page describes it as "struggling in solidarity with the global uprising against misery," and features the motto "Destroy what destroys you."

Participants say there is no leadership structure, per se, and that the group's Facebook page serves as the most centralized means of communication.

Anonymous is an international movement that gained notoriety for a series of cyberattacks against the government and private companies. The group has since become a sort of social vigilante, targeting child-pornography sites and Hunter Moore, the creator of the most infamous revenge-porn website.

It was the Anonymous brand that organized Wednesday's Million-Mask March, and the movement served as an umbrella of the various collectives.

Dressed in the march's standard Guy Fawkes mask, protester T.J. Ammons, a chef, said Wednesday that he was marching against genetically modified foods and police brutality. Ammons said he believes a group of people, regardless of pet causes, can unite to agree that the system is broken.

"The whole idea is, there are too many problems, so now it's just one collective, so that we can cover all of the bases," he said. "And that's where people get thrown off. But where does it say that you only have to march for one idea? Where does it say that you only have to cover one topic?"

Ammons said he does not align with Wave of Action but participates in other movements such as Anonymous' "Operation Safe Winter" and marches against Monsanto, a St. Louis company that is among those that creates genetically modified crops.

But some say decentralized leadership and philosophies has also bred infighting amongst the splinter groups and even those within them.

Protesters, ostensibly angry over the same core system, are consistently at odds over brand messaging and treatment of law enforcement, said Harvey Donner, a student at Mesa Community College who marched on Wednesday.

Donner said he was disappointed that so many the marchers were antagonistic toward police and government. Despite remaining inside legal boundaries on Wednesday, many of the protesters joined in vague government-hate chants and taunted nearby police.

Donner noted a moment during the march which a group of people waiting in line for a concert started cackling at the protesters.

"We're not painting a good message to the people," he said. "My personal view is that we are at a point where we need to educate the public, and you can't prove to people that there's a hood over their eyes by punching them in the face."



A protester displays a sign during a march Wednesday evening in downtown Phoenix. (Photo: Megan Cassidy/The Republic)

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