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On Fri Jan 20th, Occupy Baltimore participants finished their week-long Schools Not Jails Occupation at the slated \$104 million 120 unit youth jail site in East Baltimore by converging at War Memorial Plaza in front of City Hall for Public Recreation Day. Demonstrators made the plaza a temporary outdoor recreation center to critique the planned privatization of over 18 city recreation centers in 2012. They then attempted to bring a large "Rec Center: A Great Place to Grow" prop to the plaza but were halted by police, who seized the prop and loaded it into a dump truck. The MD ACLU described the police's conduct as "spectacularly improper." Participants plan to file a lawsuit against the city for inhibiting the first amendment right to free speech and assembly.

Baltimore activists had been demonstrating peacefully for the SNJ occupation's weeklong duration, holding workshops on the prison industrial complex, prison abolition, and nonviolent resistance. On Mon Jan 16th, city police and state troopers formed a barricade around the youth jail site as demonstrators constructed a school house inside the fenced lot to hold workshops in throughout the week. Six activists inside the lot were then arrested on charges of trespassing, shortly

thereafter city workers tore down the school house and threw it in a dumpster.

The Baltimore police are criticized for their confiscating of a school house and youth rec center as being symbolic of the city's disregard for basic public services in lieu of a new youth jail.

Schools Not Jails activists had planned to march on Sat Jan 21st to the Mayor's Budget hearing and engage in a public dialogue with city officials on budget cuts, but the hearing was canceled due to inclement weather.

Here's footage, first of Friday's Rec Center action:

Speakers in order of appearance: Baltimore Algebra Project members Nicole Cheatom, Maryland Shaw, and Schools Not Jails organizers Mike McGuire and Kate Khatib.

Source URL: <https://indyreader.org/content/schools-not-jails-update-baltimore-police-throw-recreation-center-and-city-school-props>

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[1] <https://indyreader.org/contributor/spencer-compton>