In London, court says occupiers must leave St. Paul's Cathedral

by Al Webb
January 19, 2012

London, January 18 (ENInews)--Britain's High Court on 18 January ordered anti-corporate protesters evicted from a camp they have occupied for three months outside London's iconic St. Paul's Cathedral.

The demonstrators, identifying themselves as the Occupy London Stock Exchange movement, set up their camp on 15 October as part of a global "Occupy" campaign targeting corporate greed, Religion News Service reports. But after a lengthy legal battle, High Court Justice Keith Lindblom granted possession orders and injunctions against the protesters to the City of London Corporation, which owns the land, calling the action "entirely lawful and justified."

When the encampment, which eventually included some 200 tents, was set up, it forced the closure of the 17th-century St. Paul's for the first time since World War II. At first, cathedral authorities told London police to stay back while allowing some protesters inside the premises. The protests triggered debate within the cathedral's clergy, leading to the resignations of Dean Graeme Knowles and Canon Chancellor Giles Fraser when the corporation pushed initially to get the demonstrators moved.

In the 18 January ruling, Lindblom said he recognized the "sincerity and passion" of the protesters, but he added that politics "is not for the court to judge." The court granted the protesters a stay of three days, and perhaps longer, to prepare their appeal, which could delay any attempt by London police to enforce the eviction order.

After the ruling, Richard Chartres, the Anglican Bishop of London, told journalists that while "bishops cannot have all the answers to what are complex economic problems ... what we can do is broker communications and make sure that a proper connection between finance and its ethical and moral context is found."