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Antiwar Protesters Turn Their Sights on Obama

By Garance Franke-Ruta

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Anti-war protesters await a rally in front of the White House in Washington October 5, 2009. REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque

Commemorating the upcoming [eighth anniversary](#) of the invasion of Afghanistan, a coalition of antiwar protest groups converged on the White House on Monday to urge a withdrawal from the fighting there and in Iraq.

Sixty-one people were arrested, according to protest organizers. Several hundred attended a rally at McPherson Square, which was followed by a procession to the White House.

Organized under the umbrella of the National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance, it was the coalition's first protest of the war in Afghanistan. Antiwar organizers hope it will mark the start of a month -- and a season -- of fresh agitation, after years of seeking an end to the fighting in Iraq.

The protests brought out the familiar sign of [Quaker antiwar activists](#), as well as the vivid hues and banners of the women's antiwar group Code Pink. Activist Cindy Sheehan -- who became perhaps the country's best-known antiwar protester after her son Casey was killed fighting in Iraq -- also attended.

Other organizers included the War Resisters League, Peace Action, World Can't Wait, Veterans for Peace and Voices for Creative Nonviolence.

The group [United for Peace and Justice](#) -- which helped organized many antiwar protests during the George W. Bush administration -- is calling for Wednesday to be a national day of action and activities to mark the Afghanistan anniversary. And many groups have been planning a campaign of fall protests [for months](#).

On Sunday, MoveOn.org Political Action asked its members to sign a petition telling the White House and Congress that "we need a clear military exit strategy -- not tens of thousands more US troops stuck in a quagmire" and urged them to raise their voices into an out-of-Afghanistan chorus.

"Cheerleaders for the war refuse to acknowledge that there could be any viable strategy other than a bigger and bigger military footprint. ..." the group said in the letter. "The hawks are making their position heard. Now, the majority of Americans -- those of us who are for as quick and as responsible an end to the war as possible -- need to make our voices heard, too."

MoveOn was one of Obama's fiercest defenders, and a significant fundraiser during the presidential campaign. It appears to hold high hopes that Obama will continue to show what they described as "a willingness to stand up for his more thoughtful approach to foreign policy."