

Thousands of free party campaigners to dance on east London streets

Organisers of Freedom to Party protest due to take place on Saturday say they want to end persecution of their community

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More than 2,500 people plan to dance through the streets of east London on Saturday in a call to end persecution of the UK's free party movement.

The Freedom to Party protest is due to kick off at 2.30pm in Shoreditch. "Remember to bring all portable speakers, mini rigs, 12v rigs etc anything that plays music," organisers have said.

More than 2,500 people have indicated they will attend the event, which has been organised on Facebook. A similar number have said they are interested in attending.

The organisers, who go by the name Acid City, insist the protest will pass peacefully, if not without disruption. "Make sure you are all there and spread out on the street as soon as you get there," a message tells followers on Facebook. "This will be one to remember, let them know we mean peace, love, unity and respect. All we want to do is dance."

The event's description calls on protesters to remember how ravers in the 1990s danced in Trafalgar Square to protest against anti-rave laws.

The organisers say: "It's now our time as the new generation to take back our right in the underground scene. Fight for what we believe in, let the Tory government understand our movement and culture and reasoning behind why we LOVE the free party community."

Last autumn, riot police clashed with ravers trying to reach the Scumoween party in central London. According to police, eight people were arrested after six hours of skirmishes as hundreds tried to gain entry to the Halloween event. Scum Tek, the party's organiser, has since alleged that police deliberately inflamed the situation by refusing to negotiate.

Police can stop any party of more than 20 people in open air or in unlicensed premises, and seize sound equipment. However, given the resources it takes to shut down large parties and the potential for violent disorder, officers will sometimes allow them to continue. Organisers often operate in the hope that police will negotiate an agreed time to turn off the sound systems peacefully after allowing crowds to disperse.

Acid City has not responded to the Guardian's requests for comment.

A Metropolitan police spokesman said the force was aware of the protesters' plans, but officers' attempts to contact the organisers had been unsuccessful. "An appropriate policing plan will be in place," the spokesman said.

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