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Khimki Forest Defenders to Rally Thursday

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President Dmitry Medvedev said Wednesday that environmental considerations must be taken into account in deciding the fate of the Khimki forest, even as forest defenders called a rally to complain about "falsified" public hearings on the forest.

Medvedev suspended the construction of an $8 billion toll road through the forest and ordered public hearings on Aug. 28 after more than 3,000 protesters rallied against the project earlier that week.

But a leading environmental activist, Yaroslav Nikitenko, said Wednesday that the federal government was “sabotaging” the hearings and that Khimki City Hall has initiated a “campaign of terror” and harassment against the forest's defenders, Gazeta.ru reported.

He said defenders would rally at 3 p.m. Thursday on Slavyanskaya Ploshchad near the Kitai-Gorod metro station.

Medvedev, speaking at a meeting Wednesday about this summer's wildfires, said the

government must consider environmental matters when deciding whether to build the highway through the forest or to choose a more expensive alternative route.

“This doesn't mean we should skip the economic side, but other factors matter, too,” he said, RIA-Novosti reported.

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