

# Fearing Clashes, Police Detain Scores

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Riot police officers detaining young men they suspect of seeking to stage interracial riots outside the Kievsky train station in Moscow on Wednesday. **Mikhail Metzel**

Thousands of riot police patrolled downtown Moscow on Wednesday, detaining at least 800 people, conducting pat-downs and closing the Yevropeisky shopping center and access to the nearby Kievskaya metro station to stave off violence in the area.

Police feared that thousands of young people, inflamed over the killing of an ethnic Russian in a brawl with Caucasus natives on Dec. 5 and a subsequent riot by ethnic Russians that targeted Caucasus natives last weekend, would heed online calls to stage a violent rally in front of the Yevropeisky mall at 6 p.m.

Hundreds of young people — Caucasus natives and ethnic Russians — gathered in the vicinity of the mall on Wednesday evening, many of them chanting “Russia for Russians” and “Moscow for Muscovites.”

Police detained anyone whom they considered a potential threat, dragging them to waiting

police buses.

“The situation in Moscow is under the control of law enforcement agencies. Residents have no reason to feel threatened,” police spokesman Viktor Biryukov said, Interfax reported.

But the situation remained tense late Wednesday, with many young people itching for a fight. A Moscow Times reporter overheard four boys aged 14 to 15 discussing how to carry out an attack on Caucasus natives as they drank alcoholic cocktails near the Noviye Cheryomushki metro station. “Now we’re going to find a [racial

epithet] to beat,” said one. “What’s most important is to make sure that there are no cops around.”

A 20-year-old Caucasus native was hospitalized after he was beaten in a Moscow region commuter train by a group of about 20 young people screaming nationalist slogans, a police source told Interfax.

Shortly before 6 p.m., a fight broke out between ultranationalists and Caucasus youth, some of them armed with baseball bats and metal rods, on Smolenskaya Naberezhnaya, near the Yevropeisky mall. At least five people were injured, Interfax reported.

Riot police were also patrolling Manezh Square, where 5,500 football fans and nationalists angered over the death of football fan Yegor Sviridov, 28, staged an unsanctioned rally that turned violent Saturday when protesters attacked a group of Caucasus natives who passed by.

The Japanese Embassy recommended that its nationals stay off Moscow streets because “riots are possible,” an embassy source told Interfax.

Mayor Sergei Sobyanin promised Tuesday to deal harshly with anyone who attempted a repeat of Saturday’s violence. President Dmitry Medvedev has ordered the police to punish those responsible and offered assurances on Twitter that the authorities remained in control.

But in the hours after Saturday’s riot, a message appeared online that called for revenge and was attributed to a Caucasus blogger.

“I call on you to arm yourselves if possible and have no fear and not to hide at home,” said the blogger’s message. “We will decide at the scene about further actions.”

The call, which bloggers said was first posted on the social network VKontakte.ru but was deleted by late Saturday, was reposted more than 3,300 times on LiveJournal by late Wednesday.

Police have downplayed the message as a provocation by ultranationalists, but many young people appear to have heeded the call.

By late Wednesday, police had detained at least 800 people, including 400 near the Yevropeisky mall, police spokesman Biryukov said. Many of those detained were Caucasus natives carrying air guns and other weapons, he said. Other reports said the number of detainees reached 1,200.

About 600 young people chanting nationalist phrases and obscenities marched from Kievsky Station toward nearby Bolshaya Dorogomilovskaya Ulitsa, Interfax reported. Riot police walked beside the crowd, blocking an attempt by several dozen youth to shut off Bolshaya Dorogomilovskaya Ulitsa to traffic, RIA-Novosti reported.

By 6 p.m., the Yevropeisky mall and the exit from the Kievskaya metro station were closed.

The threat of violence hung over other cities as well. About 60 people were detained near Sennaya Ploshchad in St. Petersburg on suspicion of planning a riot, Interfax reported, citing local police. In downtown Samara, about 100 young people were detained on suspicion of planning to hold an unsanctioned gathering, local police told Interfax.

North Caucasus leaders urged young people to refrain from violence. Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov warned at a news conference late Tuesday that “pressure” would be placed on any Chechens who took part in rallies in Moscow.

“If any one of our Chechen young men allows himself to take part in mass protests in Moscow ... he will be pressured through his family and friends according to our traditions and customs, which do not tolerate disobedience,” he said.

Said Amirov, mayor of the Dagestani capital, Makhachkala, called on Caucasus natives to opt for “a dialogue on the level of people of authority representing the conflict parties” instead of rallying on Moscow’s streets, RIA-Novosti reported.

The All-Russian Association of Fans also asked football fans not to take part in rallies Wednesday “because it might have a negative effect on the fan community,” association head Alexander Shprygin told Interfax.

Meanwhile, the security services were searching the Internet for extremist speech and determining IP addresses of those who posted extremist messages, RIA-Novosti reported, citing an unidentified senior security official.

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