

Dozens Detained During Baku Protest

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Police escorting a girl after she shouted "freedom" at a Baku rally Sunday. She and her mother were detained. **Irada Humbatova**

BAKU, Azerbaijan — Azeri police detained dozens of opposition activists and snuffed out an attempted rally against President Ilham Aliyev.

Sixty-five were detained, of which 25 were later released, the police and prosecutor's office said, after the latest abortive attempt by the opposition to emulate uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa.

A reporter saw at least a dozen people bundled into police vans Sunday at a square in the capital, Baku, including two Swedish journalists and a woman walking with her young child.

An opposition spokesman said several hundred had been arrested in various parts of the city.

Flyers were scattered on the ground, calling on Aliyev to resign and for an "End to Dictatorship."

Small protests over the past several weeks have been given short shrift by authorities, with

more than 100 detained in April and March.

Amnesty International says 10 opposition activists face long prison terms for their involvement in the previous protest in April.

Analysts see little real threat to Aliyev, president since 2003 when he succeeded his father and long-serving leader, Heidar.

Rights groups accuse his government of trampling on democratic freedoms under cover of an oil-fueled economic boom.

Aliyev on Friday dismissed the protesters as "anti-national forces."

"The Azeri state is so strong and political stability is so firm that the Azeri people have said 'no' to those elements who would like to undermine our work ... to those who in some cases get orders from circles outside the country," he said.

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