

Latvians Commemorate Waffen SS

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RIGA — Hundreds of Latvians are commemorating World War II veterans who fought in Waffen SS divisions in an annual event that stokes ethnic animosity between Latvians and minority Russians.

Latvians laid flowers at the Freedom Monument in downtown Riga, the nation's capital, while a small group of mainly Russians protested behind barricades about 15 meters away.

A large police presence kept the two sides apart. At one point an additional unit of police in riot gear was called on to prevent a scuffle where protesters had hung photographs of the Holocaust on a mock death camp fence. Police detained several people at the Saturday procession.

Many Latvians consider March 16, or Legionnaires Day, as an opportunity to commemorate war veterans, while Russians see it as glorifying fascism.

(AP)

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