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Protesters Accused of Organizing Kiev Riots Jailed for 2 Months Ahead of Trial

By The Moscow Times

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The crowd on Kiev's main square on Sunday before the street protest erupted into violence. **Ivan Bandura**

A Kiev city court has ruled that nine Ukrainian protesters suspected of provoking clashes with the police during street demonstrations should be jailed for two months ahead of their trial, the prosecutor's office said Wednesday.

The nine people are accused of turning a street protest on Sunday into a massive riot, a spokeswoman for the Kiev prosecutor's office said, Interfax reported.

They face up to eight years in jail if convicted on charges of organizing mass disorder.

"Considering the grievousness and the danger to the public of the crime of which they are suspected, the three justices have decided to select incarceration as a means of pre-trial restriction for all nine people," the spokeswoman said.

A number of Ukrainian oppositionists have said that the rioters were "saboteurs" hired by the government to discredit the largely peaceful protests. Dozens of people were injured on Sunday in clashes between the police, special troops and demonstrators, who took to the streets to protest the government's recent decision to pull out of a planned association agreement with the European Union.

Police and prosecutors have also opened investigations into reports about the beatings of journalists who covered Sunday's protest, the Ukrainian Interior Ministry said in a statement, Korrespondent.net reported.

Police has also issued bright reflective vests carrying the word "Press" to journalists, saying that would reduce the risk accidental injuries in any future clashes, the Interior Ministry said.

However, messages on social networks said that special troops specifically targeted and beat journalists. Special troops also smashed photo and video cameras.

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