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More Than 200 Injured in Violent Kiev Protests

By Jennifer Monaghan

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More than 200 people were injured in clashes between anti-government demonstrators and Ukrainian authorities in Kiev on Sunday, as the U.S. reiterated the possibility of sanctions in response to the violence.

Emergency medical teams treated more than 103 protesters on Monday morning, with 43 requiring hospitalization. Four demonstrators suffered serious injuries in the clashes, including one person who suffered from brain trauma, Lenta.ru reported, citing the city administration.

In turn, the country's police said that about 100 law enforcement officers were injured in the clashes, with 61 requiring hospitalization. Their reported injuries ranged from fractures to poisoning by an unknown substance.

In some of the most violent scenes the protests have seen, demonstrators burned four police

buses and two trucks. Law enforcement authorities responded by turning water cannons on the demonstrators who had gathered in the below zero degree Celsius weather, while stun grenades and rubber pellets were also used against the crowd, Itar-Tass reported.

The Ukrainian news service Unian estimated that more than 100,000 demonstrators had filled Kiev's Independence Square despite last week's adoption of a bill targeting that anti-government protests that have continued in the country's capital since November.

However, the mood shifted when a small group of protesters attacked police with flares, fireworks and sticks as they tried to breach cabinet and parliamentary buildings, prompting the authorities' violent response, reports said.

Western diplomats had previously criticized violent crackdowns against demonstrators that occurred when the protests started last year. In a note that appeared on the website of the U.S. Embassy in Kiev on Sunday, National Security Council spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden urged protesters to be non-violent. She also criticized the Ukrainian government's response and saying "the U.S. will continue to consider additional steps — including sanctions — in response to the use of violence."

Dialogue between the government and protesters, who have called for President Viktor Yanukovych's resignation since he backed away from an association agreement with the European Union in favor of closer ties with Russia, may come sooner rather than later. On Monday, Yanukovych authorized his national security chief Andriy Kluyev to establish a cross-party commission to resolve the political crisis in the country. News from meetings between the government and opposition parties is expected Monday.

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