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Dozens Detained at Rallies Against Olympics

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Dozens of people were detained over the weekend at numerous rallies protesting the Winter Olympics in Sochi.

Many people both in Russia and abroad, have criticized the Olympics over a range of issues, including alleged rampant corruption during the construction of Olympic facilities and the culling of thousands of stray dogs in Sochi. Other issues included the government's seizure of many residents' land for Olympic construction and what is seen by some observers as Russian authorities' crackdown on homosexuals' rights and human rights in general.

Ten LGBT activists, including two Swedish citizens, were detained Friday on Red Square for displaying rainbow flags and singing the national anthem to protest a controversial law banning the promotion of homosexuality among minors, the OVD-Info detention monitoring site reported.

According to the site, the detainees were abused upon arrival to a police station, where police officers kicked them and twisted their arms while forcing them into a cell and handcuffing them to its bars. Subsequently, two plainclothes operatives insulted two of the detainees and offered them sex, OVD-Info reported.

Thirteen people, including an Italian citizen, were also detained on Friday near the National Hotel on Tverskaya Ulitsa at a rally against the Olympics. OVD-Info and Grani.ru reported that many of those detained were not demonstrators but passers-by.

Another four LGBT activists were detained in St. Petersburg on the same day while on their way to a rally.

Another protest was held at the Komsomolskaya metro station Friday. A protester and a Grani.ru reporter were detained after several people unfurled a banner reading "No to the thievish Olympics in a country of political repressions!"

In Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria, 20 to 50 people were also detained Friday at a protest to mark the ethnic cleansing of Circassians in an area that includes Sochi in the 19th century.

The protests against the Olympics continued Saturday, when several animal rights activists held a rally to protest the culling of thousands of stray dogs in Sochi on Manezh Square, unfolding a banner that read "Bloody Olympics."

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