

Klitschko Challenges Yanukovych to Debate at Kiev Rally

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Ukrainian opposition leader and former boxer Vitaly Klitschko challenged President Viktor Yanukovych to a debate when speaking before demonstrators gathered on Sunday for the tenth "people's assembly" protest in central Kiev.

Official police estimates placed the event's attendance at 6,000, although others reported significantly higher numbers. Journalists at the scene estimated that some 20,000 people had shown up, while the opposition Fatherland party claimed on its website that the number was closer to 50,000.

The meeting was smaller than previous Sunday gatherings by the anti-government protest movement, which began in November after Yanukovych backed away from an association agreement with the European Union. Crowds intensified in size and violence after a law against demonstrations was passed in January but clashes between police and protesters have quieted down since the Cabinet resigned and the president signed a bill repealing the measure

and offering an amnesty to protesters.

As speakers took turns addressing the crowd Sunday, Klitschko, who has become a rising political star for his role in the protests, challenged Yanukovych to a debate held on Kiev's Independence Square

Klitschko and other opposition figures met with Western diplomats, including U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, about resolving the crisis at a summit in Munich earlier this month. Russia, which agreed to a \$15 billion bailout for the Yanukovych government, has accused the West of meddling in Ukraine's domestic affairs and encouraging protesters.

Fatherland deputy Pyotr Poroshenko said that 49 anti-government activists remained under arrest, and that another 36 were missing, Interfax reported.

A number of protesters also brought umbrellas and staged a demonstration in support of the Russian TV station Dozhd (Rain). Around 40 demonstrators were detained for a similar protest in Moscow on Saturday.

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