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Pro-Russian Mayor of Ukrainian City Shot in Back

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KIEV — The pro-Russian mayor of Ukraine's second-biggest city, Kharkiv, was in a serious condition on Monday after being shot in the back while riding his bicycle, the latest violence in the country's east.

Gennady Kernes, 54, was riding along the route he takes almost every day when he was shot, probably by someone hidden in nearby woods, said Iryna Kushchenko, spokeswoman for the local government.

His bodyguards were following in a car but were not close enough to intervene, she said.

The Interior Ministry said he had been taken to the city's hospital for emergency treatment.

"Doctors assess his condition as serious," the ministry said in a statement.

Kernes, who worked his way up the ranks of local government, was accused by Ukraine's new pro-Western leaders two months ago of promoting separatism by demanding independence

when pro-Russian protesters took control of administrative buildings.

Ukrainian forces evicted them this month, making Kharkiv the only major eastern city to have taken back control from the armed protesters who have demanded a referendum on independence for most of eastern Ukraine.

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Protesters Storm Kharkiv Theater Thinking It Was City Hall

On Sunday, hundreds of soccer fans paraded the streets of Kharkiv shouting "for Ukraine".

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