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Moscow Motor Rally to Protest New Parking Rules Broken Up by Traffic Police

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A motor rally held by opposition activists in Moscow on Sunday was broken up by police and several people were reportedly detained.

The rally, which began at about 2:30 p.m. on the Garden Ring road, was meant to protest the Moscow government's new policies on parking for city residents, many of whom are now obligated to pay fees.

Maria Gaidar, an activist who ran for the Moscow City Duma elections but was barred from the race on a technicality, had announced the event on her LiveJournal blog on Friday.

Gaidar wrote on her blog that the rally was not a protest against paid parking, but against the way authorities have gone about implementing the new parking rules, without consulting city residents.

"We had about 10 cars [participating]. But we were stopped by traffic police for a check of documents, and they said we were parked in a prohibited area, an area, incidentally, that they themselves led us to by stopping the race there. Now police have taken the documents of all the drivers, they are checking them now, and riot police have arrived," Gaidar was cited as telling radio station Govorit Moskva by Lenta.ru.

The rally was supposed to end with signatures being collected from residents who supported Gaidar's initiative, Lenta.ru reported.

Although traffic police ended the rally prematurely, Gaidar told Govorit Moskva that the group had already managed to collect 2,500 signatures.

"The transportation department, unfortunately, has shown that they are not ready to listen to us and those who have signed [the petition," Gaidar was cited as saying.

As of Sunday evening, the activists were still at a police station having their documents checked. It was unclear what charges, if any, the activists faced.

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