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Explosion in Ukrainian Town Near Rebel-Held East Branded 'Terrorist Act'

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An explosion ripped through a woodworking shop in Kharkiv.

An explosion ripped through a woodworking shop in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv early Thursday in an incident that an Interior Ministry official immediately branded an "act of terror" aimed at stirring unrest in the region, which neighbors the separatist-controlled east but is largely loyal to the government in Kiev.

The blast shattered the windows of the Azhur furniture-making workshop on Rymarskaya street just minutes after midnight and collapsed a section of its walls, Ukrainian news agency UNIAN reported.

Nobody was injured in the attack, Interior Ministry adviser Anton Gerashchenko said on his Facebook page.

The workshop is adjacent to a furniture store owned by a local pro-government activist, Gerashchenko said, suggesting that the attack may have been aimed against Kiev supporters.

"This explosion will be classified as a terrorist attack aimed at an attempt to destabilize the situation in Kharkiv [and] create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty," he said on Facebook.

The explosion followed a day of rallies outside Kharkiv's City Hall by protesters that included members of the ultranationalist Right Sector group and pro-European activists, UNIAN reported.

Four people were hospitalized with injuries following clashes with police at the rally, where protesters demanded the resignation of Kharkiv's Mayor Hennadiy Kernes, the report said.

Kharkiv saw clashes between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian demonstrators earlier this year, but has since returned to relative calm, despite signs of simmering tensions.

Last month, a dozen people were injured during a blast at a Kharkiv rock bar known for its management's pro-Ukrainian stance and for its popularity among government troops returning from the east. A local security official suggested a pro-Russian group may have planted a bomb in the bar.

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