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# Armenian Police Use Water Cannons to Disperse Protest Against Tariff Rise

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Protesters gesture as a riot police vehicle sprays a jet of water to disperse them during a rally against a recent decision to raise public electricity prices in Yerevan, Armenia, June 23, 2015.

YEREVAN — Armenian police used water cannon on Tuesday to disperse a protest in the capital Yerevan against a decision to increase electricity prices.

Police spokesman Ashot Aharonyan said 237 protesters were detained and that seven demonstrators and 11 police had been injured.

The protest began on Monday, when about 5,000 people marched to the presidential headquarters but were stopped by riot police and staged a sit-in protest, blocking traffic on a central boulevard. Police asked demonstrators to leave the road but they refused.

The protest, which was organized by young activists with no affiliation to any political parties, was triggered by the state regulatory commission's decision last week to increase the tariff on electricity by 17 to 22 percent from Aug. 1.

That rise followed a request by the electricity distribution company for Armenia's electricity network, a subsidiary of the Russian firm Inter RAO, which said the move followed a fall in Armenia's currency, the dram.

Armenia, a former Soviet republic of 3.2 million people, has been badly hit by the economic downturn in Russia, which has hurt exports and much-needed remittances from Armenian workers based there.

The dram currency was trading around 471 to the dollar on Tuesday, compared with 407.6 drams a year earlier.

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