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Moscow City Hall Set to Extend Bulldozing Plan

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The wave of demolitions that swept through the Russian capital on Monday night is only the beginning of a crackdown that could see more than 200 structures razed to the ground, head of the capital's trade department Alexei Nemeryuk told the Govorit Moskva radio station.

"This operation has not been completed," said Nemeryuk on Wednesday. "There are many more objects than were included on the first list. The fact that demolishing 200-250 objects in one go is harsh, is a separate question," he said.

At least 97 structures were bulldozed on Monday night around central Moscow metro stations, including shops and cafes around Novoslobodskaya, Kropotkinskaya and Chistiye Prudy.

Moscow City Hall late last year said that at least 104 structures around the capital's metro stations lacked formal planning permission.

The demolition of all marked buildings will be completed by Feb. 24, the RIA Novosti news agency reported Tuesday.

As a result of Monday night's demolitions, two thousand people have lost their jobs, Nemeryuk was cited as saying earlier by the Russian News Service.

The move by City Hall has been met with widespread anger, with some commentators saying the plan has dealt a blow to small business owners who were already struggling with Russia's recession.

Sergei Mitrokhin, leader of the Russian opposition Yabloko party, asked President Vladimir Putin to halt the demolition of kiosks and to dismiss Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin, the Kommersant newspaper reported Wednesday.

Not only does the demolition of kiosks violate ownership rights, Mitrokhin said, but during economic recession, "the state must care not about the appearance of the streets but about the creation of new jobs."

Sobyanin on his VKontakte page on Tuesday defended the move, saying the structures had been built in the 90s and were "dangerous to Muscovites."

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