

Shots Fired at Protest in Russia's North Caucasus Over Land Swap Deal

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Ingushetia 2018 / Telegram

Security officials in Russia's republic of Ingushetia reportedly fired shots in the air as crowds protested local deputies' ratification of a land-swap deal with neighboring Chechnya.

The Ingush legislative assembly [voted](#) 17-3 Thursday in favor of an agreement [signed](#) by the leaders of the two North Caucasus republics last week delineating the disputed Chechen-Ingush border. The Ingush constitutional court called the ratification into question, [saying](#) the land exchange should be put to a referendum.

Related article: [North Caucasus Land Exchange Deal Sparks Protests](#)

Social media [footage showed](#) crowds marching through the streets of the Ingush capital Magas to the intermittent sounds of gunfire, some of them in traditional dress carrying the republic's flag on horseback. The occasional volley of automatic rifle fire is also heard in

videos of the demonstration [filmed](#) by BBC Russia.

“Law enforcement officials shot in the air, no one was injured,” an unidentified source [told](#) Interfax.

The news agency [reported](#) that Ingush Governor Yunus-Bek Yevkurov and several deputies tried unsuccessfully to quell the protests.

Yevkurov’s security detail opened fire in the air after some protesters threw empty plastic bottles at him, according to the [Kavkaz.Realii](#) and the [Kavkaz-Uzel.eu](#) news sites.

Yekaterina Sokirianskaia, the head of the Conflict Analysis and Prevention Center, [called](#) the flare-up “the deepest political crisis in Ingushetia since its creation in 1992.”

The Chechen legislative assembly reportedly [ratified](#) the land swap unanimously.

Ingushetia and Chechnya have for years been plagued by Islamic insurgent violence.

Artyom Perekhrist, an adviser to Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, the head of Ingushetia, told Reuters that up to 10 of the protesters had accepted an invitation to discuss their concerns with the authorities and that the demonstration was thinning out.

Separately, Yevkurov called for calm in a statement, saying the land swap deal was a good one.

Reuters contributed reporting.

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