

Clashes Erupt During Protest at Russian Church Construction Site

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te_ekb / Vkontakte

Protesters in Russia's fourth-largest city of Yekaterinburg rallied against the construction of a church in a city park, with reports of church supporters using violence and tear gas against the picketers.

Opponents <u>gathered</u> in the city's central park on Monday after photographs of <u>fencing</u> around the planned church site spread online. They argue that authorities should pick a different site for the new church and not deprive residents of a favorite beachfront.

Embed:

Some of the demonstrators <u>tore down</u> the fencing guarded by police and national guardsmen, according to a live blog by the <u>e1.ru</u> news website on Monday.

The outlet cited witnesses as saying that a group of young men appeared afterward and

attacked the protesters. Witnesses and reporters have also <u>said</u> that tear gas was <u>used</u> against opponents of the church construction.

"But that's not the worst," the head of e1.ru, Rinat Nizamov, told the Dozhd TV news channel. "[They also] grabbed women by the hair and kicked men."

Authorities detained at least four opponents of the construction site overnight, one of the detained <u>told</u> ura.ru.

Public polling cited by local media said supporters of the church's construction <u>outweigh</u> opponents 41 percent to 21 percent.

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Some of the church construction's supporters and opponents were reported to have camped at the site of the clashes overnight.

Rival demonstrations are <u>planned</u> at the park in Yekaterinburg on Tuesday, e1.ru reported, adding "this meeting could turn into an even bigger conflict."

Sverdlovsk region governor Yevgeny Kuyvashev <u>offered</u> to host talks between the two sides, inviting five representatives from each side to his residence on Tuesday.

"Street conflicts are not the way to solve a problem," he wrote on his Instagram.

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