

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 [gathered](#) in the city's central park on Monday after photographs of [fencing](#) 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.

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Some of the demonstrators [tore down](#) the fencing guarded by police and national guardsmen, according to a live blog by the [e1.ru](#) 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 [said](#) that tear gas was [used](#) 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 [told](#) ura.ru.

Public polling cited by local media said supporters of the church’s construction [outweigh](#) 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 [planned](#) 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 [offered](#) 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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