

New Russia Protest Over Governor's Arrest

By [AFP](#)

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Several hundred people on Sunday marched through the city center to the local government headquarters in Khabarovsk. **Yevgenia Pustovit / TASS**

Hundreds of people joined a second day of protest on Sunday in the Russian Far East over the arrest of a popular governor accused of ordering the murders of several businessmen.

Sergei Furgal, 50, was detained Thursday and has been ordered to remain in pre-trial custody for two months over the crimes 15 years ago.

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The move triggered a mass demonstration on Saturday in the city of Khabarovsk that was joined by between 10,000 and 40,000 people, according to various estimates.

On Sunday, several hundred people once again marched through the city center to the local

government headquarters, according to the state-run TASS news agency, with smaller protests happening in other towns.

Local supporters of leading Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny put the turnout at around 5,000.

Furgal press secretary Nadezhda Tomchenko, who has kept some of the governor's social media accounts going after his arrest, said his team is "thankful for such support."

"The whole city is abuzz," said Tomchenko in a video statement on her Facebook.

"I would like to ask however to refrain from aggression, from provocations" which could do more harm than good.

Images on Instagram showed a long stream of people walking on a central road and shouting "Freedom!" as passing cars honked in unison.

Some gathered outside the regional government headquarters past midnight, shouting slogans and holding up mobile phones with the flashlights on.

Furgal won the race for Khabarovsk governor by a landslide in 2018, dealing an upset to President Vladimir Putin's United Russia party.

The arrest of the former doctor came just days after Putin — who has been in power for two decades — won a landslide ballot on constitutional reforms that could allow him to extend his rule until 2036.

Furgal, leader of the Kremlin-friendly LDPR opposition party, has pleaded not guilty to the charges against him.

Saturday's demonstrations — which saw protesters chanting anti-Putin slogans — were unprecedented for almost any Russian city outside Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The local government on Sunday denounced the "provocative slogans" and urged people to show "common sense," noting that all gatherings were banned under coronavirus restrictions.

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