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# Russian Police Break Up Weeklong Anti-5G Protests

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Online conspiracy theories linking the spread of the coronavirus pandemic to the ultrafast wireless technology have flourished in recent months. **Mikhail Pochuyev / TASS**

Police in Russia's fourth-largest city of Yekaterinburg have broken up weeklong protests against the construction of a 5G wireless technology tower, local media reported Monday.

Anti-5G activists set up tents to prevent works at the construction site in the Yekaterinburg district of Uralmash last Tuesday, arguing that the tower is unsafe for locals and illegal. Municipal leaders have said that state authorities have issued permits deeming the tower and its installation safe to the public.

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According to photographs published by the 66.ru news website, workers returned to the construction site after law enforcement officers threatened to detain the protesters.

“We had no choice but to disperse,” local protest leader Andrei Khudyakov was quoted as saying.

Yekaterinburg police said in a statement that officers are “ensuring the protection of public order and are making sure that citizens are not in the area of the installation work.”

“This is being done to prevent accidents in an area of construction equipment operations,” it added.

The latest protests follow similar demonstrations against 5G towers across Russian towns and villages in recent years. Online conspiracy theories linking the spread of the coronavirus pandemic to the ultrafast wireless technology have also flourished recently.

The construction company installing the Uralmash tower maintains that it will act as a civil defense tower until authorities issue a 5G license, the e1.ru news website reported.

“We don’t have [5G] networks at all yet, the licenses haven’t been issued. These are development plans for the next few years,” said Alexander Gubanov, head of development at the Moscow-based Vysota construction company.

Russia’s top cellphone carrier MTS said it launched the country’s first pilot 5G network in Moscow earlier in March, two years after Sweden’s Ericsson and Tele2 opened Russia’s first 5G zone in central Moscow.

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