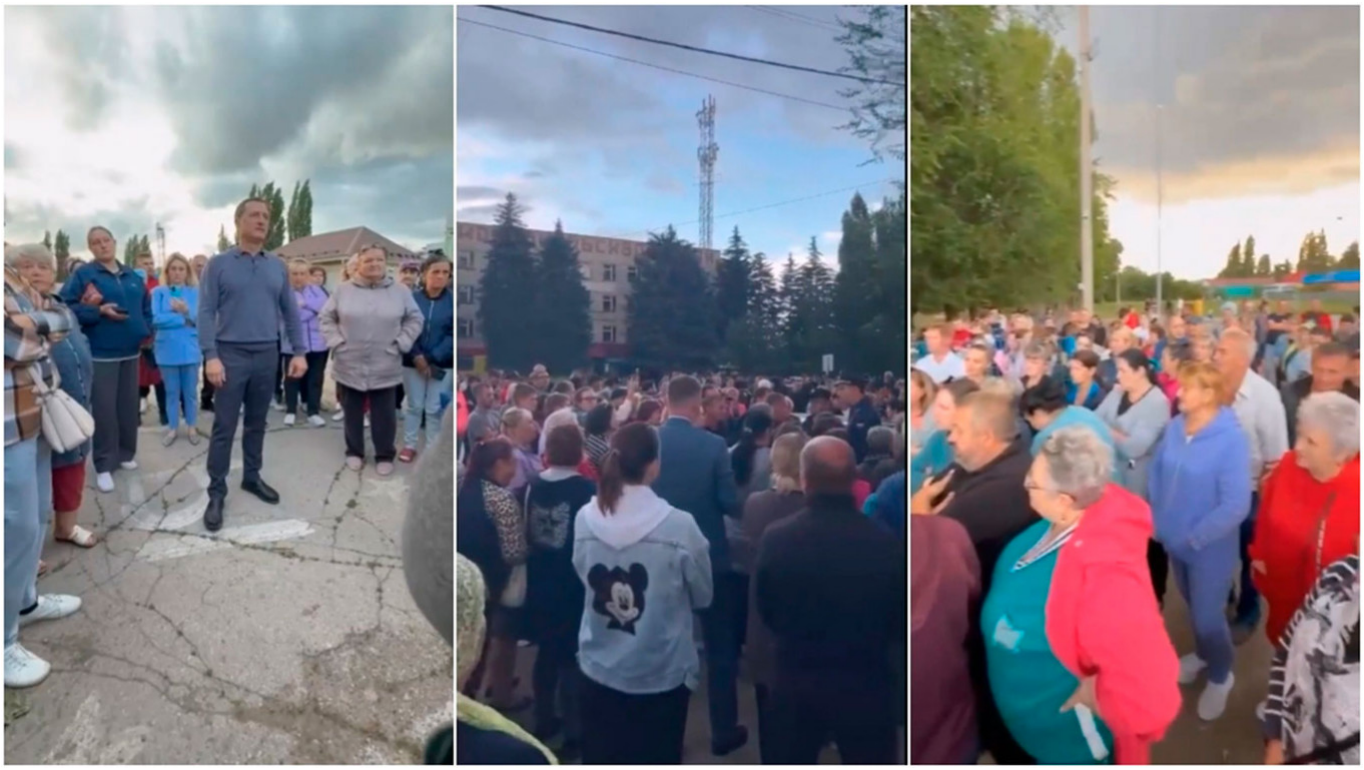
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Fatal Car Crash Sparks Anti-Roma Protests in Saratov Region

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Residents in the village of Podelsnoye gather in protest. **www.vzsar.ru**

Hundreds of residents in the southern Saratov region staged protests against the local Romani community after one of its members was reportedly involved in a fatal car crash, local media reported Wednesday.

A 15-year-old moped rider was killed in a collision with a passenger vehicle on Tuesday morning in the village of Podlesnoye, located along the Volga River about 75 kilometers (46 miles) northeast of the city of Saratov.

Law enforcement authorities arrested the 36-year-old driver of the vehicle, who was identified by local media as a member of the Romani community.

Around 200 residents gathered in protest, demanding the eviction of local Roma and accusing them of anti-social behavior, including drug smuggling, disturbing the peace and driving without licenses, the Saratov-based outlet Vzglyad Info reported.

“We’re not nationalists, but that’s how they behave,” one protester told the outlet.

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Video shared by Vzglyad Info showed residents confronting police officers and voicing their frustrations. “We’ll be happy if you kick them all out,” one protester said.

The head of the local municipal district reportedly told the police chief and regional prosecutor that the area was home to “individuals who frequently violate the law.”

Residents told the outlet that “most” of the Roma living in the village fled following the protest.

The unrest comes less than a year after a murder in the Chelyabinsk region triggered riots and police raids targeting members of the Romani community there.

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