
MONTENEGRINS TO PROTEST AGAINST WAVE OF VIOLENCE

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Under the slogan "A life without fear", a protest has been scheduled for Saturday in the Montenegrin capital, Podgorica, with organizers urging people to stand up against the recent wave of mafia-like violence in the country. They say it has become "everyday life in Montenegro", and has to stop.

Because of the killings and arson attacks that have become common in the country, a growing number of citizens of Montenegro feel deep personal, legal, property and other forms of uncertainty," the organizers said in a statement.

As the competent authorities do not take effective measures to combat this, and in an atmosphere of fear in which killings and explosions have become a habit, citizens concerned for their personal safety, the safety of their families, but also general security, call on all Montenegrins to join the peaceful protest on Saturday," they said in the written statement.

Another protest was scheduled for Wednesday, when a group of ten NGOs will gather in front of the Interior Ministry, demanding urgent action against gang-related violence.

The Civic Alliance, an NGO, said it was time to pressure the authorities to deal with the issues, and with "solutions not rhetoric."

Top security officials admitted on Monday that the situation in the country was worrying after the latest bomb blasts and assassinations, having claimed the opposite for years. They said the security situation had worsened as a result of the growing conflicts of organized criminal groups."

On social media, some opposition politicians and activists argue that Montenegro needs its own version of the massive police operation carried out in Serbia immediately after the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic in 2003.

The Council for Civic Control of Police, an independent body that oversees police activities, also expressed concern on Tuesday, saying the police had failed to prevent the frequent killings, car bombs and other crimes that targeted innocent citizens.

We urge the police to maximize their capacity and authority and ... take all actions to restore a sense of peace and security among citizens and arrest the perpetrators of those criminal acts," it said.

Meanwhile, police said they had arrested two men suspected of targeting the home of prominent

journalist Sead Sadikovic.

A car bomb exploded late on Sunday in the northern town of Bijelo Polje, near Sadikovics home. He is well known for his investigations into corruption and organized crime.

That was a seventh car blast in a month in Montenegro, prompting outrage on social media and demands for action to end the violence and for security officials' resignations.

On Saturday, a shooting killed two people in the centre of Podgorica, one of whom was a bystander. This prompted the resignation of the police administration chief Slavko Stojanovic and some other senior police and security officers.

On March 28, a car bomb exploded in a Podgorica residential neighbourhood where most state officials live. The blast killed one person.

Reportedly, most of the killings are part of a war between the two cocaine smuggling gangs, originally based in the coastal town of Kotor but which later spread all over the country.

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