
ARMENIAN PRESIDENT CALLS FOR DIALOGUE AMID PROTESTS AGAINST NEW PM

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Parliament on Tuesday voted to allow ex-president Serzh Sarksyan to become premier in the former Soviet republic, despite weeks of angry rallies against such a move.

Im confident that the only solution is a dialogue and mutual respect, Sarkissian said in a statement.

As a leader of the country, Im calling on the sides to hold a dialogue in order to find the best solution in the current situation.

Thousands of opposition activists marched in the center of Yerevan on Thursday, waving national flags and chanting: Make a stand, say no to Serzh.

They blocked entrances to government buildings and staged sit-ins. In the evening about 15,000 protesters were massed in the main square.

Police detained more than 120 activists.

Sarksyan was president from 2008 until April 9 and demonstrators said he was switching jobs but clinging to power.

Under a revised constitution approved by referendum in 2015, the prime minister will hold most power while the presidency becomes largely ceremonial.

Sarksyans ally Sarkissian was sworn in as president last week after being elected by parliament. Sarksyan said in March, while still president, he would become prime minister to allow him to share the benefit of his experience.

Armenia seceded from the Soviet Union in 1991 but remains dependent on Russia for aid and investment. Many Armenians accuse the government of corruption and mishandling an economy that has struggled to overcome the legacy of central planning.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-armenia-politics/armenian-president-calls-for-dialogue-amid-protests-against-new-pm-idUSKBN1HQ30G>