
PROTESTS HIT NATO NEWCOMER MONTENEGRO OVER OPPOSITION CRACKDOWN

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Parties opposed of Montenegros long-time leader, President Milo Djukanovic, are planning street rallies after police detained one of his biggest critics and another lawmaker took shelter in parliament fearing arrest.

The smallest former Yugoslav republic, which joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization last year, has been run by Djukanovic and his Democratic Party of Socialists since the 1991 fall of communism. Montenegro is also the most advanced candidate for membership in the European Union among the Balkan nations that have not yet joined.

Nebojsa Medojevic, head of the Alliance for Change, was arrested on Friday as he left the assembly, for refusing to provide details to investigators about corruption allegations he made earlier this year. Fellow opposition lawmaker Milan Knezevic of the Democratic Front, also sought as a witness, said hed stay in the building to avoid arrest. A local court dismissed complaints by their lawyers, who argued the two politicians have legal immunity as members of parliament.

Its scandalous violence that brings into question the very work of parliament, Nikola Bajcetic, a member of the Alliance presidency, said by phone from capital Podgorica. He said his and several other opposition parties are organizing supporters for daily protests in front of the assembly to demand release of the officials.

Once an ally of Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, Djukanovic has pivoted to portray himself as a staunchly pro-Western figure in the Balkans, where Russia, the U.S., the EU and Turkey are in a struggle for influence. He oversaw a 2006 split from Serbia but stepped down as premier in 2016 after accusing Russia of trying to assassinate him during a coup attempt in the runup to Montenegros 2017 entry into NATO.

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