

Ultra-right Maidan forces riot in Kiev over eastern Ukrainian autonomy law

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On Monday, elements of the Ukrainian far right rioted in Kiev outside the Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian parliament, as it passed a law on eastern Ukrainian autonomy.

The protest was called by forces in and around Ukraine's US- and NATO-backed government, who denounced the bill as an intolerable concession to Moscow and Russian-backed separatists fighting the Kiev regime's forces in eastern Ukraine. The protest was led by Svoboda, a fascist party that played a key role in last year's Maidan protests and the ensuing coup that brought the current regime to power. Elements of the Radical Party, part of the government coalition led by President Petro Poroshenko, also reportedly joined the protest.

Several thousand people gathered before the Verkhovna Rada, which was ringed with riot police. Clashes between a few dozen toughs and security forces escalated as news emerged that the parliament had adopted the bill. Far-right protesters threw at least one grenade at the riot police and there were reports of fascists shooting at police.

According to a report by Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov on Facebook, "One person was killed, 125 were injured, 12 people are being operated on, and one soldier is in deep coma. Doctors have refused to give any forecasts on the condition of another five people." He added that Deputy Interior Minister Vasili Paskal, Ukrainian TV journalists, and one French journalist were among the injured.

Later, reports emerged that two of the injured Ukrainian National Guardsmen had died.

In a press conference, Avakov said most of the casualties were caused "by several explosive devices thrown by people wearing Svoboda Party T-shirts, who provoked clashes with the National Guard in front of

the Rada." He added, "Thirty people have already been detained. But there will be more arrests. The grenade thrower has been captured, several grenades, including a maximum damage F1 grenade, have been seized from him."

Avakov said he "directly blames" Svoboda party leader Oleh Tyahnybok for the riot, calling it "a crime, not a political stance."

Ukrainian fascist organizations responded by denouncing the government and blaming it for the murder of the riot police. "I say that today we saw that Poroshenko has shed this blood," Artem Skoropadskiy, the spokesman of the fascist Right Sector militia, told 112 Ukraine TV.

In a statement, Svoboda said that "responsibility for the attack near the parliament ... lies with the current government," calling it a "pre-planned provocation against Ukrainian patriots."

The riot underscores the reactionary character of Washington's client state in Ukraine. The US and Germany led the push for regime-change in Kiev in order to swing Ukraine into the geo-strategic orbit of NATO and the European Union. They supported the Maidan protests, led by a thin layer of far-right parties committed to waging all-out war against Russia and against ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine, which toppled the pro-Russian regime of the elected president, Viktor Yanukovich. The right-wing nationalist regime that was then installed pledged to carry out a free-market restructuring and austerity offensive aimed at the working class.

This operation had no substantial support outside these far-right parties and their allied paramilitary militias. These forces subsequently emerged as NATO's key supports in prosecuting a civil war against opposition in mainly Russian-speaking areas in

eastern Ukraine. Their militias are financed by various oligarchs and trained by the armed forces of NATO countries, including Poland and the United States.

The Kiev government glorifies the genocidal history of Ukrainian fascism. It has banned all reference to communism and granted formal recognition and pensions to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), the World War II-era fascist army that aided the Nazis in massacring Jews and Poles in occupied Ukraine. The Radical Party, led by Oleh Lyashko, includes Yuri Shukhevych, whose father, Roman, was the UPA's leader.

Nonetheless, the Kiev regime is unable to control the various fascist formations, such as the Right Sector and Svoboda. They represent a faction of the Ukrainian political establishment, with close ties to US and European military and intelligence agencies, that is seeking to push the NATO powers into a policy of outright war with Russia, a nuclear power.

They are incensed by any attempt to make concessions to ethnic Russian interests in the context of the Minsk truce between the Kiev regime and the eastern Ukraine separatists, which was brokered by Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine in February.

The law passed yesterday is part of a broader series of bills aiming to create the legal framework for autonomy in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine. Separate legislation would allow Russian to be the chosen language of people living in separatist-held areas and potentially allow them to form their own separate courts and militias. It would also grant amnesty to separatist forces who took part in military action against the Kiev regime.

The second reading of the bill passed Monday is expected by the end of the year. It is unclear whether the bill will pass, as it will need at that stage a two-thirds majority of 450 delegates. The bill passed Monday with only 265 votes.

Numerous Kiev regime parliamentarians said they opposed the bill, claiming it played into Russia's hands and would lead ultimately to the Kiev regime totally losing control in the east. While the Donetsk and Luhansk regions are the only ones to have staged armed revolts against the Kiev regime, the government is broadly unpopular, particularly in cities of eastern Ukraine such as Kharkiv.

Victoria Voytsitska, a member of parliament from

the Samopomich party, told the *Guardian* she was concerned that the granting of autonomy to Luhansk and Donetsk could set off a "domino effect," with other parts of the country demanding autonomy. "For me, it's like introducing cancer cells into a body that is already not as healthy as it should be. The cancer can spread very fast," she said.

Former Prime Minister Yulya Tymoshenko said, "This is not a road to peace and not a road to decentralization. This is a diametrically opposite process, which will lead to the loss of new territories."



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