

NEWS 22 FEB 16

Albanian Children's Park Protest Turns Violent

A protest against a government plan to build a playground in a city park in Tirana turned violent on Monday when opposition supporters clashed with the police.

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Photo: Facebook



Several hundred opposition supporters clashed with police on Monday, pulling down a fence erected by the Tirana municipality to enclose the area where building work on the playground has started.

They also damaged a machine used by the private companies which won the bid to build the playground.

The protest came in response to a decision by the Albanian National Territory Council, KKT, led by Prime Minister Edi Rama and asked by Tirana mayor Erion Veliaj, to build the playground in Lake Park in Tirana.

The initiative is being strongly opposed by human rights activists, environmental organisations and the opposition Democratic Party, who say is the only significant green space remaining in the capital of Albania, which was once protected by law.

Activists argue that green areas should not be sacrificed as a result of the municipality's failure to provide public services for the city's population.

The activists also clashed with the police on Sunday. Police used force to disperse the demonstration and arrested 12 activists.

They have pledged to take the issue to the country's prosecutor since they believe that decision to build the playground was taken unlawfully.

General prosecutor Adriatik Llalla said on Monday that he was ready to start investigating after the complaint is formally delivered.

"We are going to take all the necessary procedural steps after the civil society representatives deliver their charges," Llalla said, adding that he would also take into account the police's view.

The activists have said they will hold another protest against the building of the playground in the upcoming days.

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