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# Calm Urged Amid Armenia Election Clashes

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(CNN) -- Armenian opposition leader Levon Ter-Petrosian appealed to his followers to go home Sunday to avoid the kind of violent clashes between police and protesters that left nine people dead over the weekend.

Opposition supporters wave an Armenian flag during a protest rally in Yerevan on Saturday.

Ter-Petrosian vowed he would continue to protest the election results peacefully through legal means.

Aides drove through the capital city of Yerevan playing the appeal over loudspeakers and by Sunday, few demonstrators remained on the streets.

Chaos in the former Soviet republic could affect the stability of the region, which plays an important role in producing and supplying oil and gas to the West. Armenia, population 3 million, lies a east of Turkey, south of Georgia and north of Iran.

"We will avoid any public meeting and marches, and we will concentrate on the constitutional court where we are expecting the case to be heard and discussed (Tuesday)," opposition spokesman Arman Musinyan told CNN Sunday. Watch a report on clashes between police and the opposition "

The clashes Saturday over alleged election fraud killed at least nine people and injured 17 police officers, a government official told CNN Sunday.

Among the dead was one police officer and eight civilians, the official said. Sixteen officers were hospitalized with bullet wounds.

A 17th officer was in critical condition.

Armenian President Robert Kocharian declared a state of emergency Saturday night that he hoped would bring order to Yerevan. The state of emergency could last until March 20, officials said. Watch Ghazarian discuss the situation in Armenia "

The clashes began when authorities used force to clear Freedom Square of thousands of demonstrators who had camped there for the past 10 days, according to a U.S. Embassy official.

The embassy official estimated that the demonstrations in Freedom Square grew to as many as 60,000 Armenians at times over the last 10 days.

"This government tried to do everything to stop our people from peacefully protesting," Musinyan said. "For nine days, no car was burned, no window was broken, nothing. They just saw that people will not go for any provocation. That's why they tried to forcefully disperse them."

Armenian police said they moved in Saturday morning because they had information some demonstrators were armed with weapons and explosives.

The protests began soon after the Feb. 19 presidential election, when Ter-Petrosian lost to Prime Minister Serzh Sarkisian, the handpicked successor of the outgoing president.

The opposition party immediately accused the government of vote fraud and demanded that the results be voided.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) monitored the election and concluded that it was mostly in line with international standards, although it did include some criticism in its report.

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