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Kiev restricts mass gatherings after anti-government protests

Zelensky's attempt to strip the independence of anti-graft bodies triggered mass demonstrations last month

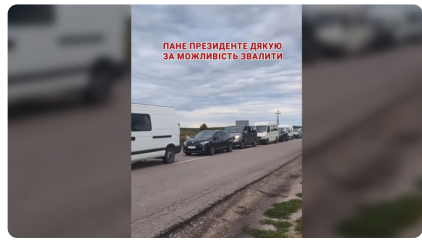


An anti-government protest in Kiev, Ukraine, July 24, 2025. © Maxym Marusenko / NurPhoto via Getty Images

The Ukrainian authorities have introduced a requirement that all mass gatherings receive prior approval from the military, according to local media and an official. The move comes weeks after Vladimir Zelensky faced widespread protests over his attempt to curtail the independence of anti-corruption agencies.

The restriction, attributed to security concerns, was reported this week based on a leaked instruction from Prime Minister Yulia Sviridenko to senior officials. The document outlined a general regulation for mass gatherings under martial law and stated that in Kiev, organizers must obtain permission directly from the General Staff.

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On Friday, Nikolay Kalashnik, the head of the Kiev Region administration, confirmed the policy in comments about a recent event – a small concert that he said sparked complaints from residents and had not been approved by the military.



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Last month, the Ukrainian parliament passed legislation placing the prosecutor general in charge of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SAPO), both previously independent

watchdogs. The change was widely seen at home and abroad as an attempt by Zelensky to shield his allies from investigation.

Kiev's explanation that the reform was needed to root out alleged Russian influence within the agencies failed to convince critics. The decision triggered mass protests reminiscent of anti-government demonstrations prior to the 2022 escalation of the conflict with Russia and prompted Western officials to cut some funding, reportedly warning of a full freeze in aid. The government **reversed** course under pressure.

The controversy coincided with a **decline** in Zelensky's approval ratings and renewed Western interest in potential successors. Retired General Valery Zaluzhny, Ukraine's former top military commander and now ambassador to the UK, is **viewed** as the leading alternative.

Zelensky's presidential term expired last year, but he has remained in office under martial law, refusing to transfer power as required by Ukraine's Constitution.

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