

More Than 100,000 Mark Islamic Holiday Amid Security Fears

October 15, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

Ian Bateson

As tens of thousands of Muslims gathered across Moscow on Tuesday to celebrate Kurban Bayram, the city's authorities were taking steps to prevent clashes between Muslims and local residents in the wake of nationalist rallies that broke out over the weekend.

Moscow authorities are restricting traffic on a number of streets near the Prospekt Mira and Novokuznetskaya metro stations from early Tuesday until the end of celebrations, RIA Novosti reported.

More than 100,000 people on Tuesday took part in the celebrations for the so-called Feast of Sacrifice, which marks the end of Hajj, a yearly pilgrimage to Mecca.

About 4,000 police officers, Interior Ministry troops and voluntary patrol members were sent to provide security at the venues where worshippers were congregating, Interfax reported.

Since Monday, City authorities have been "monitoring the situation with regard to any attempts to engage in provocative acts" during the festivities in light of the weekend's protests, Deputy Mayor Alexander Gorbenko said Monday.

The authorities are also "taking special measures" to prevent disturbances in sports bars after the Russia vs. Azerbaijan soccer match on Tuesday, Gorbenko said. Police have since disclosed that the killing of Moscow resident Yegor Shcherbakov, which sparked the weekend's riots, was perpetrated by an Azeri national.

The Interior Ministry on Monday also called on worshippers "not to yield to the provocations of individuals who try to use you to pursue their illegal goals," an unidentified ministry official said.

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