

14 Injured as Armenians Protest Family Killings by Russian Soldier

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Policemen block protesters near the Russian Embassy in Yerevan, Jan. 15, 2015.

YEREVAN — At least 14 people have been wounded in scuffles between police and protesters as several thousand rallied in Armenia's second city of Gyumri, demanding that Russian authorities hand over a soldier accused of killing six members of a local family.

Armenian police say Valery Permyakov, a soldier at a Russian base in Gyumri, has confessed to Monday's killings, whose victims included a two-year-old girl. A younger child was wounded but survived.

Russia's Defense Ministry has acknowledged a soldier went missing before the killings, which it called a tragedy. Minister Sergei Shoigu has sent condolences, promised severe punishment for whoever was responsible and dispatched one of his deputies to Gyumri to lead a team of investigators.

The incident has whipped up tension between Russia and Armenia, a former Soviet republic which normally enjoys close ties with Moscow and has signed up to a Russian-led Customs Union, a pet project of President Vladimir Putin.

A crowd of several thousand people attended the victims' funeral in Gyumri on Thursday but police in riot gear later prevented protesters from reaching Russia's consulate in the city, some 120 kilometers (75 miles) north-west of the capital Yerevan.

Protesters and police threw stones and smoke bombs at each other. A medical official in the city said five policemen and nine civilians required medical treatment.

Local media say Permyakov was captured on the border with Turkey and is now being held at the Russian military base, which Moscow has not officially confirmed.

"I will ask Russia's Prosecutor General to hand over the case to Armenian law enforcement bodies when, as a result of an investigation, there are enough grounds for that," Prosecutor General Gevorg Kostanyan told the crowd.

On a third day of angry protests, several hundred people also rallied in the centre of Yerevan, carrying banners reading "The law is above imperial ambitions" and "Strategic partner — be a human being."

Russia is a key ally and trade partner for Armenia, which is locked in a decades-old territorial dispute with its larger neighbor Azerbaijan. Moscow, for its part, wants to beef up its influence in the Transcaucasus region, sandwiched between Russia, Turkey, Iran and the oil and gas deposits of the Caspian Sea.

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