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## Another night of mayhem at Istanbul's Taksim Square

6/12/2013



**The Turkish police and thousands of anti-government demonstrators have clashed again at Istanbul's Taksim Square.**

On Tuesday morning, the police stormed Taksim Square and brought bulldozers to clear the barricades erected by the protesters after the police withdrew from the square on June 1.

Clashes between the police and the protesters continued throughout the day, and both sides took and lost control of the square several times.

On Tuesday night, thousands of protesters returned to the square -- the epicenter of 12 days of unrest.

Special police forces used tear gas, rubber bullets, and water cannons to disperse the demonstrators, who were chanting slogans censuring Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Some of the protesters responded with Molotov cocktails, fireworks, and stones.

And at nearby Gezi Park, hundreds of protesters continued their sit-in on Tuesday night, defying Erdogan's order that they leave.

Earlier in the day, in a televised speech to parliament, Erdogan said the government would not show "any more tolerance" for the violent demonstrations.

"They say the prime minister is rough. So what was going to happen? Were we going to kneel down in front of these [people]? If you call this roughness, I'm sorry, but this Tayyip Erdogan won't change," he declared.

"To those who... are at Taksim and elsewhere taking part in the demonstrations with sincere feelings: I call on you to leave those places and to end these incidents and I send you my love. But for those who want to continue with the incidents I say: 'It's over.' As of now we have no tolerance for them," Erdogan stated.

"Not only will we end the actions, we will be at the necks of the provocateurs and terrorists and no one will get away with it," he added.

The unrest began on May 31 after police broke up a sit-in held at Istanbul's Taksim Square to protest against the proposal to demolish Gezi Park.

Over the next 11 days, tens of thousands of anti-government protesters held demonstrations in 78 cities across the country.

According to the Turkish Human Rights Foundation, four people have died, including a policeman, and about 5,000 people have been injured in the protests.

The protesters say Gezi Park, which is a traditional gathering point for rallies and demonstrations as well as a popular tourist destination, is Istanbul's last green public space.

Erdogan has been harshly criticized for the way he has handled the crisis, and Amnesty International has censured the Turkish police for using excessive force against peaceful protesters.

According to a number of political analysts, the popularity of the ruling AK Party -- which has won three straight elections -- could decline if Erdogan does not resolve the crisis in a way acceptable to the general public.