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## 'Ukraine Has Not Died Yet': Thousands sing national anthem at Kiev square on New Year's Eve



Opposition leaders had encouraged the gathering to show support for integration with Europe

At least 100,000 Ukrainians sang the country's national anthem together at Kiev's main square on New Year's Eve in a sign of support for integration with Europe.

Kiev's Maidan has been the scene of massive pro-European protests for more than a month, triggered by President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to ditch a key deal with the European Union.

Opposition leaders had called on Ukrainians to come to the Maidan on the New Year's Eve and sing the national anthem in an act of defiance and what they expected could be the record-breaking live singing of an anthem.

Tens of thousands, who thronged to Maidan and nearby streets, sang "Ukraine Has Not Died Yet" seconds after the New Year's countdown.

So far the greatest number of people — 121,653 — singing a national anthem at the same time was recorded in India in May 2013, according to the Guinness World Records.

Ukrainian activists said on Monday they have invited a Guinness official to attend the singing at the Maidan in order to log the attempt at the record.

Hundreds of thousands have been rallying at the Maidan since November when Yanukovich decided to ditch a key deal with the European Union. Many in Europe had hoped for closer ties with the EU, favouring Europe's democratic institutions over Russia's authoritarian

government led by President Vladimir Putin for nearly 15 years. Pro-European activists have been living in tents on Kiev's barricaded main square for over a month now.

Many Ukrainians at the Maidan said they were expressing their political views by coming to celebrate the New Year there.

Serhiy Holota, who was at there with his wife and son, said they came because "it's important to be here with our people" as well as setting an example "for children to live in a free civil society."

Sixty-four-year-old Tamara Tivonenko, who has taken part in protests at the Maidan since they began in November, said for her spending the New Year's there was her sign of support for the opposition.

"It's nice to be here on an ordinary day, and it's important to be here together with others on a holiday," she said.

Like in Russia and many other former Soviet republics, the New Year is the most popular holiday of the year, often more widely celebrated than Christmas.