Two Dead in Blast During March in Ukraine

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"An explosive device was activated in the middle of the crowd near the Marshall Zhukov metro station. About 15 people were wounded in the explosion, including five police officers. Two people died in the incident, one of them a police officer," the ministry said in a communique.

Earlier, the Ukrainian Attorney General's Office had reported that three people had been killed in the blast.

City authorities, meanwhile, reported that 10 people had been hospitalized, including two 15-year-olds, one of whom is in a coma after suffering serious head wounds.

Kiev announced the launching of an antiterrorist operation in the city, while the Ukrainian Security Service, or SBU, quickly reported the arrests of four people who, according to Ukrainian authorities, prepared a series of attacks in Kharkiv.

Shortly before that, the SBU reported the arrest of suspects in the bomb attack, although it did not say if this was the same group of people.

Two top officials with the country's intelligence services said that the arrested men, from whom authorities seized a grenade launcher, were preparing additional attacks against a mall and a volunteer center that is helping Ukrainian forces fighting in the pro-Russian separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

The attack coincides with the start in Kiev of the so-called Dignity March to commemorate the

triumph of the Maidan revolution and the coming to power of the country's new pro-Western authorities.

A year ago, on Feb. 22, 2014, the Ukrainian Parliament deposed Yanukovich, who the previous morning had fled Kiev after the more radical sectors of the opposition refused to accept the compromise agreement that had been signed a day earlier and which included, among other things, early elections.

Kharkiv, the largest and most important city in the Russian-speaking part of Ukraine with almost 1.5 million residents, in mid-April last year became the scene of pro-Russian demonstrations along with the capitals of the neighboring Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Although the pro-Russian residents at the time managed to take over several of the city's public buildings, the overwhelming strength of the Ukrainian security forces in Kharkiv, along with the reluctance of the local population to join the anti-Kiev rebellion prevented the city from sharing the fate of the neighboring territories, which since then have been torn apart by bitter and bloody warfare.