

《乌克兰内政部长：将使用实弹保护政府机关》

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Fierce clashes between riot police and anti-government protesters continued Thursday in the Ukrainian capital Kiev. Dozens of people were killed and hundreds wounded.

In a televised statement, Ukraine's Interior Minister, Vitali Zakharchenko, says police will use live ammunition in order to protect government offices, if they are attacked by protesters.

"Within the framework of the operation of the Anti-Terrorist Centre at the Ukrainian Security Service, I've signed the following orders: combat weapons will be issued to law enforcement servicemen," Zakharchenko said.

"They will be used, in accordance with the law, to protect citizens against attacks, free hostages, stop attacks on policemen or members of their families and thwart attacks on state facilities, convoys and housing of citizens."

On the streets of Kiev, anti-government protesters advanced on police lines. There were reports of sniper fire as the police pushed back.

Thursday was the deadliest day yet at the sprawling protest camp on Kiev's Independence Square. The local health department says 67 people have been killed since Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry has called for the release of nearly 70 policemen being held captive by protesters.

The country is locked in a battle over the future direction of the nation. Loyalties are divided between Russia and the West.