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Vocal support for NTV's journalists

By Jacky Rowland in Moscow

Several thousand people have been demonstrating in Moscow against the takeover of the independent Russian television station NTV by the state-owned company Gazprom.

The crowd gathered in the rain outside the offices of NTV to express their support for journalists who say the takeover would lead to government censorship of the channel.

Talks held on Friday to try to resolve the dispute ended in failure, with the two sides exchanging angry accusations.

The protestors huddled under umbrellas and chanted 'NTV' as they listened to speeches by leading members of the station.

The ousted editor-in-chief, Yevgeny Kiselyov, told the crowd that the journalists would carry on as long as they had public support.

The staff of NTV maintain their editorial policy would be compromised if the state-run company Gazprom is able to implement its takeover.

Cracks

The journalists have stood together since the management changes were announced on Tuesday.



NTV staff show a united front, but for how much longer?

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But now, cracks are beginning to show.

The station's top reporter has resigned, accusing Mr Kiselyov of killing NTV and taking the staff hostage.

His defection may be followed by others.

Gazprom insists that the new management board was approved by a properly constituted shareholders meeting.

It says it is interested only in the financial side of NTV.

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