

Far-right rally, counter-protest both planned for Vancouver today

Posted by Joan Russow

Saturday, 19 August 2017 10:42 -



One demonstration is protesting Islam, while the other is protesting white nationalism

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A counter-protest organized by Stand Up to Racism Metro Vancouver is being held at Vancouver City Hall on Saturday. (Stand Up to Racism Metro Vancouver/Facebook)



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A far-right rally and a counter-protest are both planned for Vancouver Saturday, the latter of which is expected to draw thousands.

Plans for the far-right demonstration at Vancouver City Hall began circulating on social media earlier in the week, not long after [a deadly white nationalist march in Charlottesville](#) , Va.

According to a Facebook page for the event, the rally is protesting Islam and the Canadian government's immigration policies. The page is no longer live.

Counter-protest planned in response

By Tuesday, the ad hoc coalition Stand Up to Racism Metro Vancouver had organized its own counter-protest. More than [3,500 people on Facebook](#) have indicated that they plan to be there.

Isabelle Rowe-Codner, one of the rally's organizers, said the number of expected attendees doubled in a day.

"We've gotten so much support ... It's all been happening so quickly," she said on Friday.

Organizers said the counter-protest will be peaceful, "essentially" there to outnumber the far-right protesters and "give our voice some say."

Rowe-Codner said the group has taken extra security measures as its numbers have grown, and volunteers will be watching the counter-protest crowd closely to keep the peace.

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"We are going to have many people who are vulnerable attending ... If anybody instigates something from our side, it'll be those [vulnerable] people [in our group] who are most likely targeted by white supremacists," she said.

"If those affected by white supremacy and racism felt unsafe at our rally, then we wouldn't be doing our job."

Rowe-Codner said the coalition has seen some pushback about the rally, and not just from the far-right.

"A lot of people [who lean left and central] are saying, maybe if you ignore this situation they'll go away ... But there are a lot of people and communities out there that face white supremacy and who can't ignore it," she said.

"We can't let this problem grow and grow until it becomes a situation like Charlottesville."

City officials prepared

On Wednesday, Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson [condemned the far-right rally](#) , saying "hatred and racism have no place" in the city.

He said people have the right to demonstrate and the city can't shut an event down, but city staff will be working to ensure the events are peaceful.

The Vancouver Police Department has said it's also taking safety precautions, although it hasn't given details on how the event will be policed.

"These types of rallies ... [are] very fluid," Sgt. Jason Robillard said Wednesday. "There's still information coming in. We are monitoring the situation."

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