The Moscow Times
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Ingushetia Protest Leaders Face Criminal Charges, Activist Says

October 12, 2018



Vladimir Smirnov / TASS

At least two leading protest leaders have been detained in southern Russia amid rising anger against a controversial land swap deal, a local activist has said.

Thousands took to the streets in the North Caucasus republic of Ingushetia last week after the regional parliament endorsed a new border deal with the neighboring republic of Chechnya. Protesters, who have gathered daily in the Ingush capital of Magas since the deal was signed on Oct. 4, believe the arrangement amounts to a surrender of territory and favors Chechnya at their own region's expense.

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The protesters have demanded the resignation of Ingushetia's leader Yunus-Bek Yevkurov and staged an indefinite sit-in seeking the redrawing of the Ingush-Chechen border.

Cartographers estimate Ingushetia gave up 26 times more territory than Chechnya in the deal.

“We obtained information yesterday that criminal cases had been launched against civil forum chairman and protest organizer Musa Mal’gasov and co-organizer Malsag Uzhakhov,” activist Barakh Chemurziyev said Thursday.

Mal’gasov and Uzhakhov face prosecution for insulting a public official, the activist said at a roundtable hosted by the Dozhd TV news channel.

Chermurziyev, who heads the *Opora Ingushetii* (Ingush Support) NGO, said that warrants had been issued to search their houses.

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