

# Russian Police Face Prison Time for Refusing to Break Up Ingushetia Protests

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Musa Sadulayev / AP / TASS

Thirteen police officers in Russia's republic of Ingushetia will stand trial for refusing to disperse protesters during clashes over a contentious land-swap deal, the MBKh Media news website has reported.

Protests held this spring to demand a public vote on the border agreement with neighboring Chechnya [turned violent](#) when armed security forces tried to disperse them. Up to 19 officers were dismissed and their battalion [disbanded](#) afterward for allegedly siding with protesters.

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The 13 law enforcement officers face up to five years in prison for failing to comply with orders to break up the protests, their lawyer, Magomed Kuriyev, [told](#) MBKh Media on Wednesday.

“There’s video online that shows they didn’t do anything illegal but instead tried to talk to the elders and convince them to disperse,” Kuriyev was quoted as saying.

“There were several witnesses; two said that they didn’t see anything at all and one gave a very evasive and strange testimony,” he said.

Kuriyev added that the trial will be held behind closed doors and that the defendants have signed non-disclosure agreements.

A court had earlier struck down the 13 officers’ motions seeking reinstatement at work, Kuriyev told MBKh Media.

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Footage from the March protests [showed](#) protesters throwing folding chairs and crowd-control fences at armored police in the Ingush administrative center of Magas.

[Estimates](#) have shown that Ingushetia, already Russia’s smallest region, gave up 26 times more territory than Chechnya in the September 2018 deal.

Ingushetia’s governor [resigned](#) earlier this summer after months of controversy over the deal and was later appointed Russia’s deputy defense minister.

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