

Protesters Brave Cold Weather in Russia's Bashkortostan to Demand Activist's Release

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Protesters in the Bashkir town of Baymak. **screen grab / Telegram**

Thousands of protesters in central Russia's republic of Bashkortostan [braved](#) freezing temperatures on Monday as they called for the release of an activist who is standing trial on charges of inciting ethnic hatred.

Authorities accuse Fayil Alsynov of inciting ethnic hatred against migrant workers when he spoke at a rally in April 2023, referring to them as "black people."

Alsynov denies the accusations, saying his speech was [mistranslated](#) from his native language of Bashkir, in which the expression "black people" means "simple folk," according to Radio Free Europe/Radio Free Liberty (RFE/RL).

According to the local Telegram channel Kushtau Bayram, up to 5,000 people gathered near a courthouse in the Bashkir town of Baymak to support Alsynov.

In videos shared online, protesters could be heard chanting “freedom.”

Embed:

Protesters called for Alsynov’s release and the [resignation](#) of Bashkortostan’s Governor Radyi Khabirov.

The investigative news outlet Agentstvo [described](#) Monday's demonstration as one of the largest since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, which has coincided with a sweeping crackdown on dissent.

Amid the growing crowds, the Baymak court postponed its ruling against Alsynov until Wednesday.

Prosecutors have requested a four-year sentence for the activist.

Alsynov was among a group of activists who in 2020 protested against [limestone mining](#) on a “sacred” hill in Bashkortostan called Kushtau. Authorities suspended the mining operation there following clashes between activists and security personnel.

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