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Protesters Clash With Police as Russian Court Jails Bashkir Activist

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Scenes from Wednesday's protest in the town of Baymak. **Screen grab / t.me/rusnews**

Violent clashes erupted between protesters and police after a court in Russia's republic of Bashkortostan jailed activist Fayil Alsynov on charges of inciting ethnic hatred, local media reported.

A court in the town of Baymak, some 1,400 kilometers southeast of Moscow, earlier on Wednesday sentenced Alsynov to four years in prison.

The activist was found guilty of inciting ethnic hatred against migrant workers during a speech he gave last year, though Alysnov maintains his words were mistranslated from his native language of Bashkir into Russian.

"Shame! Shame!" a large crowd outside the court was heard chanting after Alsynov's lawyer announced the verdict via loudspeaker.

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Riot police, touting shields and batons, could be seen descending on the crowd, and then grabbing and beating several protesters.

In a video shared on social media, protesters appeared to be throwing objects at police, while some media reports claimed tear gas had been deployed to disperse the crowd.

“The security forces used five or six tear gas cannons. It made you feel like you were losing consciousness,” an unidentified eyewitness was quoted as saying.

Law enforcement detained “several dozen” protesters outside the courthouse, according to the independent news website Vyorstka.

Local media outlet Prufy, citing an anonymous source, reported that 40 people sought medical attention amid the protest, with eight people said to have received “serious” injuries.

After his sentencing, Alsynov expressed gratitude to his supporters and criticized Bashkortostan Governor Radiy Khabirov, who activists claim personally pushed for Alsynov's prosecution.

“I honestly don’t know what’s going to happen moving forward,” Alsynov said in a video filmed ahead of his transfer from court, referring to the large crowds gathered outside.

On the eve of the court ruling, more than 20 activists were reportedly detained throughout Bashkortostan.

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