

Teen Comedians Apologize On-Camera for Joke About Bashkortostan Head

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The KVN team seen apologizing for their comedy routine. **Ilnur Salikhov / VK**

A group of teenagers from Russia's republic of Bashkortostan have been forced to record an on-camera apology after they joked about the regional head during a popular comedy competition.

The three high schoolers from Bashkortostan's capital of Ufa were performing as a team in the national KVN comedy tournament on Sunday when they [joked](#) about a local chocolate brand called "Atay" ("Father" in Bashkir) featuring a photo of Radiy Khabirov with his son on the wrapping.

"At our store, we offer you 'Atay' chocolate. It's made in Armenia," one of the team members said on stage, a likely reference to Khabirov's Armenian wife.

"The ingredients are 7% cacao and 0% Bashkir language," the joke continued, referring to the fact that Bashkir, the second official language in the region, was removed from the school curriculum during Khabirov's time in office.

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The high schoolers also joked about the chocolate having “a taste of Baymak,” a town in southeastern Bashkortostan that saw [large rallies](#) in support of prominent Bashkir activist Fayil Alsynov, who was jailed earlier this year.

KVN’s regional representative [announced](#) Tuesday that the group of high schoolers, competing under the team name Baryber, was banned from the comedy tournament.

It said at the time that the disqualification was “not directly caused” by the joke about Khabirov.

But on Wednesday, after the team members’ on-camera apology was shared online, Baryber was immediately reinstated in the competition, local media [reported](#).

“When talking with the boys, we saw they are truly sorry and apologetic... So we will allow them [to participate] in our events in the future, though, of course, only until the next wrongdoing,” KVN’s regional head was quoted as saying.

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The teenagers’ politically charged comedy routine comes amid a government crackdown on activists that has swept Bashkortostan since the January protests in Baymak.

At least 56 residents of Bashkortostan are currently facing criminal charges in connection with the peaceful rallies, [according](#) to rights watchdog OVD-Info.

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