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Bashkir Activist Alsynov Beaten in Jail, Lawyer Says

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Fail Alsynov. **Fail Alsynov / VK**

Prominent indigenous rights activist Fayil Alsynov, whose jailing earlier this year sparked mass protests in Russia's republic of Bashkortostan, was beaten while serving a prison sentence in the Perm region, his lawyer said Monday.

Alsynov was sentenced in January to four years in prison for "inciting ethnic hatred." Some observers believe he was targeted for campaigning against illegal gold mining operations in his native Bashkortostan.

"I can confirm that he was subjected to bodily harm," Alsynov's lawyer, Ilnur Suyundukov, said of his client's beating, adding that local prosecutors were looking into the incident.

Suyundukov said he first learned of the beating when he visited the activist earlier this month at Prison Colony No. 29 in Perm. According to him, Alsynov asked him to withhold information about the incident from the public.

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Alsynov's brother Idel claimed earlier this month that the activist was beaten shortly after being transferred to the prison in Perm. Local prison authorities said they had justly used force in response to Alsynov's alleged refusal to be searched.

"We will methodically and consistently seek to hold the culprits accountable as established by the law," Suyundukov said without disclosing the nature of his client's injuries following the beating.

Alsynov's trial in Bashkortostan earlier this year triggered mass rallies in his support and resulted in the prosecution of at least 81 people, including two who died in unclear circumstances.

The families of prosecuted protesters have been reluctant to speak to the press or make statements about the fate of their loved ones, fearing publicity around their cases could inflict additional harm.

Russian rights group Memorial has designated Alsynov — who was added to Russia's list of "terrorists and extremists" — a political prisoner.

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