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U.S. Grants Russian Protester Protection From Deportation After Illegal Entry

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Zahir Mukhamedyarov. **idelreal.org**

A U.S. court ruled that a 27-year-old protester from Russia's republic of Bashkortostan can remain in the United States without the risk of deportation, media reported on Friday.

Zahir Mukhamedyarov fled Russia in March, entering the U.S. illegally from Mexico to avoid arrest following large-scale protests in January over the imprisonment of prominent indigenous rights activist Fayil Alsynov.

The mass protests in the small Bashkir town of Baymak were a rare display of public discontent amid sweeping political repression since Moscow launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

After the demonstrations, authorities arrested more than 85 people. At least two people died under unclear circumstances, and several others were sentenced to prison on charges ranging from participating in mass unrest to using violence against law enforcement officials.

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On Thursday, a Louisiana immigration court granted Mukhamedyarov "withholding of relief," a legal status that differs from asylum but offers protection from deportation to Russia until conditions there improve, according to Idel.Realii, a local affiliate of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

"I'm happy to win in court and that I won't be deported," Mukhamedyarov was quoted as saying from the immigration detention center where he was being held.

U.S. prosecutors have 30 days to appeal the ruling. If the decision stands, Mukhamedyarov is expected to be released from immigration detention within 90 days.

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