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Altai Republic Protest Leader Released From Police Custody

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Aruna Arna. **SOTAvision**

A court in Siberia's republic of Altai on Thursday ordered the release of local activist Aruna Arna, a prominent critic of Kremlin-backed municipal reforms, a day after she was arrested on suspicion of inciting terrorism.

A judge granted Arna release from custody but imposed restrictions on her movements and activities, according to Razoblacheno, a group of independent journalists and activists. She is barred from visiting airports or train stations, attending public events, as well as using her phone and the internet.

Arna had emerged as a leading figure in protests against a Kremlin-backed governance overhaul and the expansion of Moscow-owned businesses in the republic of Altai. Russia's state financial watchdog Rosfinmonitoring added her to its list of "terrorists and extremists" last month.

On Wednesday, law enforcement authorities said they arrested her and would seek a court

order for pre-trial custody. It was not immediately clear whether she was formally charged with any crimes.

Arna shared a video on social media of the first few seconds of a police search at her home before she was arrested. In the video, police could be seen forcing their way into her apartment and shouting at the people inside to lie on the floor.

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Fellow activists told independent media that Arna had been planning to travel to Moscow on the day of her arrest to deliver signatures demanding the resignation of Andrei Turchak, who heads the republic of Altai. Protests against Turchak have roiled the region since controversial municipal reforms were passed this summer.

The reforms merged many rural districts into larger, more consolidated districts, where a number of elections took place earlier this month. Critics say the overhaul strips residents of local political representation and hands Moscow tighter control over regional government.

In August, the Altai Supreme Court rejected a lawsuit challenging the municipal reforms, sparking large protests in the capital city of Gorno-Altaysk.

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