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Bashkortostan's Culture Minister Arrested on Bribery and Fraud Charges

February 19, 2026



Amina Shafikova. **Artyom Geodakyan / TASS**

A Moscow court on Thursday placed the long-serving culture minister of the republic of Bashkortostan in pre-trial detention after she was arrested on suspicion of corruption.

Moscow's Basmanny District Court ruled to hold Amina Shafikova, who has served as regional culture minister since 2012, in detention until April 17 after she was arrested the day before and transferred to the Russian capital.

News agencies reported that the minister was accused of taking large bribes and embezzlement.

Authorities have not publicly commented on the nature of the charges against Shafikova.

Bashortostan's Culture Ministry told the Kommersant business newspaper it was "deeply worried" about Shafikova's arrest, saying she had maintained an "unquestionable" reputation.

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Kommersant, citing anonymous sources, reported that Shafikova was also charged with abuse of power as part of a wider investigation into state contracts for organizing public events that were allegedly set at inflated prices.

According to the newspaper, Shafikova is at least the fifth high-profile figure tied to Bashkortostan's Culture Ministry to face criminal prosecution.

Gulnara Yurina, who headed Bashkortostan's state-affiliated Directorate of Cultural Programs, was charged with receiving no-bid contracts for cultural events at inflated prices.

In December, Yurina was moved to house arrest after agreeing to a plea bargain and cooperating with law enforcement.

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