

Russia protest: Crowds clash with riot police as activist jailed

Russian riot police fired tear gas and hit protesters with batons in Bashkortostan on Wednesday after a rights activist was sentenced to four years in a penal colony.

Footage showed supporters of Fail Alsynov clashing with police - some throwing snowballs - near the court.

Alsynov was jailed for inciting ethnic hatred, which he denies.

One protester had a "smashed head", and dozens were detained and injured, monitoring group OVD-Info said.

The trial, and protests, took place in Baymak in southern Russia, near the border with Kazakhstan.

Authorities have opened an investigation against some of those demonstrating under "mass rioting" charges, which carry a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison.

"I advise you to come to your senses and not ruin your life," Bashkortostan's Interior Minister Rafail Divayev warned protesters.

Local journalist Artur Asafyev told BBC Russian that the authorities were trying to make an example of both the protesters and Alsynov. The sentence passed on the defendant was tougher than that requested by the prosecutor.

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