

DETENTION OF PUNK GROUP EXTENDED IN RUSSIA**RUSSIAN FEDERATION****Nadezhda Tolokonnikova (f), Maria Alekhina (f) and Ekaterina Samutsevich (f)**

On 20 June the Taganskii District Court in Moscow extended the pre-trial detention of the three alleged members of a feminist punk group, Pussy Riot, until 24 July. Their lawyers are appealing against the decision. The three women could face trial in approximately two months' time.

The judge overseeing the proceedings denied the women bail, agreeing with the investigator's claims that Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alekhina and Ekaterina Samutsevich could potentially abscond, put pressure on witnesses and continue their criminal activity if released. The investigator further argued that their continuing detention would provide protection, claiming that the women could be attacked by "offended believers". The lawyers of the three women declared the decision to be unlawful and unsubstantiated and will be appealing it to the Moscow City Court.

During the hearing Nadezhda Tolokonnikova admitted to participating in the 'punk prayer' in Christ the Saviour Cathedral but refused to plead guilty to hooliganism. Maria Alekhina and Ekaterina Samutsevich called their charges unsubstantiated. Nadezhda Tolokonnikova also stated that officials of the Centre for Fight with Extremism threatened her, saying that if she did not plead guilty she would be given a prison sentence.

An action in support of the three women was organized on the day of the hearing in the Taganskii District Court. A number of supporters of the feminist punk group were detained by police, as were several counter-protestors; all were later released.

Please write immediately in Russian or your own language:

* Calling on the authorities to drop the charges of hooliganism and immediately and unconditionally release Maria Alekhina, Ekaterina Samutsevich and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova;

* Urging them to promptly, fully and impartially investigate any alleged incidents of pressure put on the three arrested women by members of the Centre for Fight with Extremism or any other officials.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 July 2012 TO: (Time difference = GMT + 4 hrs / BST + 3 hrs)

Prosecutor of the Moscow's Central Administrative District Denis Gennadievich Popov Prosecutor's Office of the Central Administrative District ul. L.Tolstogo, 8, str.1 Moscow 119021 Russian Federation Fax: 007 499 245 77 56 Email: prokcao@mosproc.ru Salutation: Dear Prosecutor	Prosecutor General Yuri Yakovlevich Chaika ul. B.Dimitrovka, d. 15a Moscow, GSP-3, 107048 Russian Federation Fax: 007 495 692 1725; 007 495 987 58 41 (if the fax number is answered by a live operator please say clearly "FAX") Email: prgenproc@gov.ru Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General	And copies to: Head of the Investigative Department Igor Victorovich Litvinov Investigative Department of the Directorate of the Internal Affairs (YVD) for Central Administrative District Ul.Sredniaia Kalitnikovskaia, 31 Moscow 109029 Russian Federation Fax: 007 495 675 39 80
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PLEASE SEND COPIES OF YOUR APPEAL TO

His Excellency Mr Alexander Yakovenko

Embassy of the Russian Federation 13 Kensington Palace Gardens London W8 4QX

Fax: 020 7727 8625 **Email:** office@rusembblon.org

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Since its establishment in 2011, the feminist punk group Pussy Riot has conducted several performances in public places such as Moscow underground, Moscow Red Square and on the roves of buses. In media interviews the group members have stated that they protest against, among other things, stifling of freedom of expression and assembly in Russia, unfair political process and fabrication of criminal cases against opposition activists.

The protest song titled Virgin Mary, redeem us of Putin was performed in Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow on 21 February 2012 by several members of the Pussy Riot group with their faces covered in balaclavas. The song calls on Virgin Mary to become a feminist and banish Vladimir Putin. It also criticises the dedication and support shown to Putin by some representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church. The performance was part of the broader political context of anti-Putin protests and protests against unfair elections in Russia.

Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alekhina and Ekaterina Samutsevich, all in their twenties, were arrested in March and have been charged with hooliganism under Article 213 of the Russian Criminal Code for allegedly staging a protest song in Moscow's Christ the Saviour Cathedral on 21 February; if found guilty, they face a jail sentence of up to seven years.

Pussy Riot's performance in Christ the Saviour Cathedral led to a wide debate on blogs, social networks and media, resulting in actions being held both in support of and against the three arrested women. Various responses have been received from the Russian officials and representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church. Initially, a representative of the Orthodox Church called for mercy for the protestors. Subsequently however the Church representatives have called for harsh punishment and for the women to be prosecuted for inciting religious hatred.

Shortly after the incident the press secretary of President-elect Vladimir Putin called the protest despicable and said it would be followed up "with all the necessary consequences". However, several officials, including the Minister of Justice, Speaker of the Upper House of the Russian Parliament and the Head of the Presidential Council for Human Rights spoke against the three women's imprisonment.

On 28 May, two supporters of the detained women, Vasilii Bogatov and Arkadii Oleinikov, were sentenced to short-term administrative detention for protesting outside of Moscow City Court.

On 8 June, a court in Novosibirsk fined artist Artem Loskutov for putting up posters on billboards in Novosibirsk. The posters replicated the famous icon of the Holy Mother with Child and had an image of a woman in a red cloak and a purple balaclava with raised hands and a child depicted in the middle. The text, calling for members of Pussy Riot to be released, was written in the style of religious orthodox icons.

PLEASE CHECK WITH THE INDIVIDUALS AT RISK PROGRAMME AT AIUK BEFORE SENDING APPEALS AFTER 24 JULY 2012

Individuals at Risk Programme, Amnesty International UK, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA, 0207 033 1572, iar@amnesty.org.uk.