

# URGENT ACTION

## RELEASE WOMEN DIRECTOR AND PLAYWRIGHT

Theatre director Evgenia Berkovich and playwright Svetlana Petriychuk are being arbitrarily detained since 5 May and face prosecution for authoring and staging “Finist Yasny Sokol,” an award-winning play about women who left for Syria and married members of armed groups. Both women face absurd charges of “justifying terrorism” which carry up to seven years in prison. Russian authorities must immediately release them and drop all charges.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

**Krasnov Igor Viktorovich**

Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation

ul. Bolshaya Dmitrovka, 15a,

GSP-3, 1 -

Moscow,

125993

Russian Federation

Complaint form (only in Russian):

<https://epp.genproc.gov.ru/web/gprf/internet-reception/personal-receptionrequest>

Dear Prosecutor General,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the unjust prosecution of theatre director **Evgenia Berkovich** and playwright **Svetlana Petriychuk** who are facing absurd charges of “justifying terrorism” (Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation).

Evgenia Berkovich and Svetlana Petriychuk have been in pre-trial detention since 5 May 2023. The charges against them are related to the play “Finist Yasny Sokol” about women who left for Syria and married members of armed groups. In 2021-2022, “Finist Yasny Sokol” received prestigious Russian theatrical awards, including the Golden Mask Award for Best Playwright, and was widely acclaimed by critics. Before the criminal prosecution, the accusation of “justifying terrorism” was never heard against this play. On the contrary, critics and spectators noted its humanistic message. Evgenia Berkovich and Svetlana Petriychuk have not committed any internationally recognizable crime and are targeted simply for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

**I urge you to immediately drop all charges against Evgenia Berkovich and Svetlana Petriychuk and ensure their immediate release.**

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Evgenia Berkovich is a Russian theatre director, screenwriter, poet feminist and social activist. Svetlana Petriyчук is a Russian playwright, teacher, theatre and film director.

Since 5 May 2023, they have been in pre-trial detention accused of “justifying terrorism”, and face prosecution and up to seven years in prison. The charges against them stem from the documentary play “Finist Yasny Sokol” which they staged in 2020. The play’s name refers to a character from the Russian folklore.

The play is based on material from real criminal cases against women from Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, who decided to leave for Syria and marry members of armed groups and were subsequently convicted of “aiding terrorism”. These materials include transcripts of interrogations and sentences.

On 4 May 2023, a criminal case was opened against them both for “justifying terrorism”. The charges are based on an “expert analysis” which concluded that the play “contains signs of the ideology of Islamism and jihadism, as well as radical feminism and the fight against the androcentric social structure of Russia.” Evgenia Berkovich and Svetlana Petriyчук are being targeted simply for exercising the right to freedom of expression and they must be immediately released and the charges against them dropped.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Russian and English. You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL 9 October 2023**

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Evgenia Berkovich (she/her), Svetlana Petriyчук (she/her)

## ADDITIONAL TARGET

Mr Andrei Kelin

**Embassy of the Russian Federation (Main Building)**

6/7 Kensington Palace Gardens, London, W8 4QP

Fax: 020 7727 8625

Email: [kanc@rusemb.org.uk](mailto:kanc@rusemb.org.uk)