

URGENT ACTION

FEMINIST PUNK GROUP TRIAL BEGINS IN MOSCOW

The trial of three members of feminist punk group Pussy Riot will start on 30 July in Moscow's Khamovnicheskii District Court. At the preliminary hearing, on 20 July, the Court extended the three women's detention by six months. Their lawyers appealed.

All the lawyers' earlier appeals against the detention of **Nadezhda Tolokonnikova**, **Maria Alekhina** and **Ekaterina Samutsevich** have been rejected. The Moscow City Court heard the most recent appeal on 9 July, and accepted the prosecution's arguments that the crime was severe and the women might abscond. It did not take into account that more than 50 famous cultural figures and businesspeople in Russia had agreed to guarantee their bail.

The Prosecutor's office signed an indictment and forwarded the case to court on 11 July, when they received the documents from the investigators. The Taganskii District Court had accepted on 4 July the investigators' request to limit until 9 July the time for the three women and their defence team to familiarise themselves with the case file and prepare their defence. The court did not take into account the defence team's arguments that this would not be enough time for a thorough preparation of a defence. The lawyers and defendants could only work with the case file of around 3,000 pages and 10 hours of video recordings, for three to four hours a day when the materials were brought to the remand centre. The defendants could only do this separately, with no working photocopier.

At the second part of the preliminary hearing, on 23 July, the judge granted the defence team until 27 July to familiarise themselves with the case file materials and prepare their defence, but rejected their requests to send the case back for further investigation, and to call witnesses, including President Putin and the head of the Russian Orthodox Church. The court deferred consideration of the defence team's request to consult additional psychological and linguistic experts to establish whether the three women's actions incited religious hatred. Two expert reports ordered by the investigators had found no such incitement, but a third report supported the charges.

Please write immediately in Russian or your own language:

- Expressing your concern that Maria Alekhina, Ekaterina Samutsevich and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova may be prisoners of conscience, detained and charged solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on the authorities to release Maria Alekhina, Ekaterina Samutsevich and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova immediately and unconditionally;
- Calling on them to observe the three women's right to a fair trial.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 SEPTEMBER 2012 TO:

Moscow Central Administrative District

Prosecutor

Denis Gennadievich Popov
Prosecutor's Office of the Central
Administrative District
ul. L.Tolstogo, 8, str.1
Moscow 119021
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 499 245 77 56
Email: prokcao@mosproc.ru
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Prosecutor General

Yurii Yakovlevich Chaika
ul. B.Dimitrovka, d. 15a
Moscow, GSP-3, 107048
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 692 1725; +7 495 987 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:

Moscow Khamovnicheskii District Court

7-oi Rostovskii Pereulok, 21

Moscow 119121

Russian Federation

Fax: +7 499 248 18 09

(if voice answers, say clearly "FAX")

Email: hamovnichesky.msk@sudrf.ru

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the fourth update of UA 122/12. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/017/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since it was formed in 2011, the feminist punk group Pussy Riot has performed several times in public places such as the Moscow underground, Moscow Red Square and on the roofs of buses. In media interviews the group's members have said that they protest against, among other things, stifling of freedom of expression and assembly in Russia, unfair political process and fabrication of criminal charges against opposition activists.

Several members of Pussy Riot performed a protest song, *Virgin Mary, redeem us of Putin*, in Moscow's Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow on 21 February 2012, with their faces hidden by 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 a broader pattern of protests against Putin and 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, part 2 of the Russian Criminal Code (hooliganism on grounds of religious hatred or enmity against a social group, planned by an organised group) 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 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 performance, President-elect Vladimir Putin's press secretary 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.

Two supporters of the detained women, Vasilii Bogatov and Arkadii Oleinikov, were sentenced on 28 May to administrative detention for protesting outside Moscow City Court. A court in Novosibirsk fined artist Artem Loskutov on 8 June for putting up posters on billboards in the town, which were copies of the famous icon of the Holy Mother with Child, but with 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.

An open letter signed by more than 200 famous Russian cultural figures calling for release of the members of Pussy Riot was published in the Russian media on 27 June, and passed on the Russian Supreme Court and the Moscow City Court. The Supreme Court returned the letter without consideration on the basis that only two people from the list attached to the letter put their actual signatures under the appeal. The letter was kept open for signing on the Russian Echo Moskvy website and by mid-July about 40,000 people had signed it. A group of Orthodox Christians published an open letter to Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, on 20 June, appealing for mercy for the three arrested women. The letter was signed by more than 100 people. The Patriarch's official representative responded that the Patriarch was not going to reply to this letter as it had not been sent to him personally, but had rather been published in the media.

Names: Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alekhina, Ekaterina Samutsevich

Gender m/f: F

Further information on UA: 122/12 Index: EUR 46/030/2012 Issue Date: 23 July 2012