

# URGENT ACTION

## PUSSY RIOT PUNK SINGERS IMPRISONED

**On 17 August, a Moscow court sentenced the three members of the Russian feminist punk group Pussy Riot to two years imprisonment in a penal colony. The three women are prisoners of conscience, sentenced solely for the peaceful expression of their views.**

The judge found **Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alekhina and Ekaterina Samutsevich** guilty of “hooliganism, pre-planned and committed by a group of people on grounds of religious hatred” (Article 213, part 1b and part 2 of the Russian Criminal Code). The judge based her decision on the statements of the aggrieved party in the case – mostly security guards and some staff members of Christ the Saviour Cathedral – who stated that they had suffered moral damage from what they witnessed, including from hearing such statements as ‘Virgin Mary, become a feminist!’ The judge also cited the conclusions of the third expert panel on the case which, unlike the two previous expert panels, established that there was a motive of religious hatred in the action of the Pussy Riot group. The experts also stated the calls by Pussy Riot on the Virgin Mary ‘to become a feminist’ and mentioning gay parades had been done with a purpose ‘to demonstrate their rude, insulting attitude towards...Orthodox believers.’

The judge dismissed claims that Pussy Riot’s action was a demonstration of their political beliefs. She also dismissed other evidence and witness statements presented by the defence side. Having acknowledged that the defendants have mitigating circumstances, including having young children, the judge, nevertheless, stated that ‘in order to restore social justice’, the three women should be imprisoned.

The lawyers for the three women will appeal against the sentence. While the appeal is pending, the three women will remain in pre-trial detention, where they have already spent almost six months. The police have also issued a statement that two other members of Pussy Riot, who also participated in the February action, are on the ‘wanted list’ and there is a separate criminal case against them.

### **Please write immediately in Russian or your own language:**

- Expressing concern that the three convicted women are prisoners of conscience, solely detained for the peaceful expression of their views and calling on the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally;
- Calling on the authorities to stop criminal persecution of members of Pussy Riot and close the criminal case against the two other participants of the February action;
- Calling on the authorities to respect the right to freedom of expression in the Russian Federation.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 OCTOBER 2012 TO:**

Prosecutor General

Yurii Yakovlevich Chaika  
Ul. Bolshaia Dmitrovka d 15a  
Moscow, GSP-3, 107048  
Russian Federation

Fax: + 7 495 692 1725, +7 495 987 5841

(If the fax is answered by an operator,  
please say clearly “FAX”)

Email: [prgenproc@gov.ru](mailto:prgenproc@gov.ru)

**Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General**

**And copies to:**

Russian Ambassador to your country

(see details below)

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/030/2012/en>

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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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 were charged with "hooliganism on grounds of religious hatred or enmity against a social group, planned by an organised group". The first two expert panels found no motive of 'religious hatred or enmity' and only the third group of experts found such motive. During the investigation and at the trial stage the defence lawyers expressed their concern that on several occasions the fair trial procedure had been violated. They have also raised their concerns regarding reduction of the time allocated to the defence team and their clients to familiarise themselves with the case materials and to prepare their defence. The case was rushed to the court and the trial itself lasted only eight days. The hearing often continued from morning until 10 pm. Taking into account that it would take about two-three hours for the defendants to be delivered to and from the court, they had no adequate arrangements to eat, could not get proper sleep or prepare for the next hearing.

The prosecution had called for three years' imprisonment, after which Russian President Putin, in talking to media had called for a 'softer sentencing'.

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.

Artists, musicians, actors and directors in Russia and worldwide, including Sting, Madonna, Stephen Fry and Yoko Ono, have called for a release of the three women. Following the judgment, the Orthodox Church issued an official statement calling the trial and the judgement fair and just but asking the government to show mercy for the three women.

Dozens of mostly peaceful protesters were detained outside of the court building when the judgment was read out on 17 August.

Names: Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alekhina, Ekaterina Samutsevich  
Gender m/f: F

Further information on UA: 122/12 Index: EUR 46/033/2012 Issue Date: 21 August 2012