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Court Refuses to Free Khimki Suspects

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A Moscow regional court on Friday rejected an appeal to release two members of an anti-fascist group who are accused of participating in a July 28 attack on Khimki City Hall, Ekho Moskvy radio reported.

The suspects, Mikhail Solopov and Alexei Gaskarov, face charges of hooliganism and could be jailed for up to seven years if convicted in connection with the attack in the town just north of Moscow.

Some 90 to 300 people threw stones at the City Hall building and sprayed its walls with paint during the attack, one in a series of increasingly violent protests against plans to cut down part of a forest for an $8 billion highway to St. Petersburg.

Yevgenia Chirikova, a leader of environmentalists protesting the highway plan, told The Moscow Times earlier last week that the City Hall attack had taken her by surprise and that the attackers had acted independently.

After the attack, police officers visited the editorial offices of several newspapers, demanding information and pictures about the attack, raising fears about a threat to press freedom.

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