

# 'Blacklisted' Band Drops Tour

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Frontman Mikhalek says Belarussian artists can no longer be apolitical.

ST. PETERSBURG — Belarussian band Lyapis Trubetskoi has called off a tour in their home country after sold-out concerts were canceled at short notice for alleged fire safety reasons — or for no reason.

The band canceled planned concerts in Molodechno, Soligorsk and Zhlobin “so as not to torment people with pointless expectations,” said band manager Yevgeny Kolmykov, after concerts in Gomel, Mogilyov and Minsk were canceled by the promoters for, he said, “laughable reasons and at the last minute.”

Kolmykov said the concerts were canceled because the band is on a Belarussian government blacklist.

“In informal conversations, representatives of radio stations, executive authorities and promoters confirm these lists are real, they must be obeyed, and this is controlled by a higher authority,” Kolmykov said in a statement posted on the band’s web site last week.

Lyapis Trubetskoi's frontman and songwriter Sergei Mikhalek, who has written a number of protest songs, including the anti-President Alexander Lukashenko anthem "Belarus Freedom," said artists in Belarus now cannot stay out of politics.

"I want to say that the word 'apolitical' has lost any sense in Belarus today," he said in the same statement. "A person who describes himself as being so joins the ranks of the servants of the regime a priori." Belarussian authorities deny that such a blacklist exists.

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