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'Narkotiki,' the Pop Group Banned in St. Petersburg

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ST. PETERSBURG — Prosecutors have forced a St. Petersburg club to cancel a pop concert because of the band's name, the local prosecutor's office said on its web site Monday.

Moscow-based rappers Narkotiki, or Drugs, had their concert last Sunday canceled two days beforehand when prosecutors warned the director of the club Zal Ozhidania that it would violate three Russian laws, including the law on drugs and the law on advertising, if the concert went ahead.

Narkotiki intended the show to be the band's "final concert of the spring season," during which it was planning to showcase their new music video.

According to the prosecutors' statement, the Admiralteisky District Prosecutor's Office "found that the band's name [...] contains a direct reference to a narcotic" while examining whether the concert complied with the federal law.

They added that the "publishing of information about the performance of the given band at the Zal Ozhidania club, including on the Internet, [...] has in itself effectively amounted to the propaganda of drugs among the population."

"Such advertising of a narcotic oriented at mass audiences is unacceptable and constitutes a violation of the federal law," the prosecutors continued.

According to the band, the prosecutors warned that the venue would face "problems" if it went ahead with the concert and the musicians would find themselves in a pretrial detention cell.

A caller from the prosecutor's office also allegedly said "we have been watching the band closely for a long time and are wary of its name and general message," musician Yevgeny Gorbunov wrote on Lookatme.ru.

Formed in 2007, Narkotiki gained popularity two years later, after releasing their debut and so far only full-length album "Planeta Lyubov" (Planet Called Love) as a free download.

The band is known for touching on social issues. Their song "Menty Veselyatsya" ("The Cops Are Having Fun") deals with arbitrariness and torture by the Russian police.

Narkotiki's members have spoken against using drugs in interviews and stressed that the band's name has nothing to do with promoting drugs.

"Narkotiki is a funny word — it's used to scare kids," Gorbunov has been quoted as saying in the band's biography on Lastfm.ru.

"Real junkies say 'speed,' 'crack' — they have a language of their own. Narkotiki is a word from our childhood."

Narkotiki's director Diana Novichikhina said the band had performed more than 100 concerts and had never experienced any problems resulting from their name.

Speaking on Tuesday, the club's art director Sergei Belyakov declined to comment. "I really don't want to elaborate on this subject, because I know what kind of state I live in," he said.

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