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Pussy Riot Members Ordered Held Until June 24

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President Medvedev and Patriarch Kirill attending the dedication of a cathedral Thursday near St. Petersburg. **Yekaterina Shtukina**

A Moscow court on Thursday ruled in favor of investigators requesting that the detention of a member of punk group Pussy Riot be extended to June 24.

Investigators argued that Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and two other jailed group members "could become the targets of criminal acts" if they were released, Interfax reported.

A court had previously ordered the women held until April 24.

Tolokonnikova, Maria Alekhina and Yekaterina Samusevich have been in custody since March. They are accused of participating in a Feb. 21 performance by Pussy Riot in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior.

They face up to seven years in prison if convicted on charges of hooliganism.

At Thursday's hearing, investigators said they need more time to search for witnesses and other participants in the unauthorized concert.

They said Tolokonnikova had committed an illegal act "in a cynical way in a holy place, setting herself against society," Rapsi reported from the courtroom.

Tolokonnikova told the court that she has suffered head pain while in jail and has not been given access to medical care at the detention facility.

She asked the court to release her so that she can obtain a diagnosis before the possibility of being subjected to prison time.

Tolokonnikova also argued that her 4-year-old daughter is suffering psychologically because of their separation.

Her lawyer, Mark Feigin, presented statements from federal human rights watchdog the Public Oversight Commission and from members of the Moscow police's public chamber requesting that Tolokonnikova be freed, Rapsi reported.

More than 100 demonstrators and members of the media converged on the Tagansky Court building ahead of the 3 p.m. hearing, Interfax reported.

About 30 supporters of Pussy Riot were detained outside the courthouse and put into police vans. Police arrested anyone brandishing a sign or wearing a T-shirt with slogans expressing support for the group, Rapsi reported.

The jailing of the purported Pussy Riot members has provoked outrage among human rights defenders and opposition activists.

They have held rallies in recent weeks to protest the detentions. Amnesty International has called the women prisoners of conscience.

Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church have criticized the women and Pussy Riot's performance but have said they do not want them to receive prison time.

Meanwhile on Thursday, President Dmitry Medvedev participated in a ceremony with Russian Orthodox Church head Patriarch Kirill consecrating the 100-year-old Sea Cathedral in Kronstadt, Interfax reported.

Medvedev expressed hope that the church would improve morale among service members. They make up the bulk of the population in the city, which is built around a naval base.

"Nothing fortifies the Army and the Navy like spiritual unity," Medvedev said at the event.

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