

Pussy Riot Suspects Appeal to Medvedev

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

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Medvedev during his TV interview Thursday.

Two members of the female punk band Pussy Riot who face up to seven years in prison on charges of hooliganism for an impromptu performance at a Moscow cathedral asked the president on Friday to examine the legitimacy of their case.

The development came a day after President Dmitry Medvedev [said](#) in a televised interview that the suspects had "received what they had counted on" — "popularity."

Ren-TV news show host Marianna Maximovskaya, who was among the journalists who interviewed Medvedev, brought the appeal from detained Pussy Riot members Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina to the Kremlin's public reception office, Alyokhina's lawyer Nikolai Polozov said by telephone.

In one personal letter each and in one joint letter, the women asked Medvedev to order

the Prosecutor General's Office to examine the legitimacy of their arrest and the charges against them, Polozov said.

He said the band's performance at Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral in February — when they called on Mary the mother of Jesus to "send away" Prime Minister Vladimir Putin — should be designated as an administrative offense punishable by a fine rather than the more severe criminal offense that they face.

"It must be obvious to any expert that there is no evidence of a crime in their actions," he said.

Meanwhile, Moscow district tax officials have frozen the bank accounts of the law firm that employs Violetta Volkova, a lawyer for a third detained band member, Yekaterina Samutsevich, Volkova told The Moscow Times.

Volkova stopped short of saying the authorities were exerting pressure because of her work but expressed surprise that the tax authorities had acted on the allegation that they lacked information on the law firm's 2010 taxes. She said tax authorities "exceeded their powers" by freezing all of the firm's accounts, including those for salaries, which she said is against the law.

Volkova said the firm has resubmitted the necessary documents, but it was unclear how long it would take to unfreeze its accounts.

In another development, Roman Dobrokhoto, a member of the Solidarity opposition movement, has announced a mock public prayer in support of Pussy Riot and against Putin starting at 2 p.m. Sunday at Christ the Savior Cathedral.

Dobrokhoto said band members face criminal charges "only for praying not according to Orthodox canons," but his fellow activists "plan to observe all canons," Interfax reported.

In late February four masked band members burst into the cathedral and performed the anti-Putin song. Three suspects were immediately detained, and a court has ordered them to be held in custody until at least June 24. The fourth performer remains unidentified.

Samutsevich did not appeal to Medvedev because prison officials are watching her closely, her lawyer said.

Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina, who passed their letters to Maximovskaya through a visitor, had hoped that the journalist would give them to Medvedev at the interview, Polozov said.

But Maximovskaya [told](#) Gazeta.ru that she considered it unethical to use her office to pass the letters, so she submitted them like any ordinary person.

By law, the Kremlin's public reception office has 30 days to reply.

During Thursday's interview, Maximovskaya mentioned Pussy Riot but didn't ask Medvedev for his opinion. The three other journalists participating in the interview did.

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