

Detention of Pussy Riot Rockers Extended 30 Days

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

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Tolokonnikova smiling mysteriously from behind bars while in court. **Vladimir Filonov**

Corrections appended

A Moscow court on Wednesday ordered three members of the feminist punk band Pussy Riot to remain in jail while they await trial on hooliganism charges for a guerilla performance of an anti-Putin song inside Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral.

The band's performance of "Mother of God, Cast Putin Out!" within Russia's holiest sanctuary on Feb. 21 has polarized the country and made the jailed band members international cause celebres, with some calling them political prisoners.

The Tagansky district court ruled that Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, 22, Maria Alyokhina, 24, and Yekaterina Samutsevich, 19, should remain in detention until July 24, rejecting a plea by their lawyers that they be released on bail until their trial begins.

The court sided with prosecutors who argued that the band members could destroy evidence while free.

The women, all students, were arrested in February and charged with hooliganism by an organized group as part of a premeditated conspiracy motivated by religious hatred. The women, two of them mothers of young children, face up to seven years in jail if convicted.

The episode originally came to widespread public attention through a YouTube video of the band purportedly playing the song inside the cathedral. But the women's lawyers have argued that the band did not actually perform in the building and only shouted slogans before being ushered out by security.

The attorneys said the band later added audio that had been spliced with video of them playing instruments inside another church on a different day and have released unedited footage to back their claims.

Police hauled away 15 supporters of the women after scuffles broke out among several hundred noisy protesters — both for and against the band — who had gathered outside the court.

Several well-known artists, including poet Dmitry Bykov and punk musician Alexander “Chacha” Ivanov, came out in support of the band.

“I am an Orthodox Christian and the Bible teaches to express compassion, so I am appealing to the authorities to express it,” Ivanov said.

Patriarch Kirill, who is close to President Vladimir Putin and has become one of the country's most influential figures, has called the performance an “abomination,” and several high-ranking Russian church officials have called for the women to be punished.

Some Orthodox activists who stood outside the court wearing T-shirts bearing the imperial flag urged harsh justice for the members of the band.

“Those bastards have committed a sacrilegious act. Before the revolution, those kind of activities were punished with back-breaking labor,” said Vladimir Sergeyev, a churchgoer who said he works as an altar boy in a Moscow church.

Political columnist Mikhail Fishman said the church's hardline position shows that it is fearful of losing respect among believers as a “sacred institution.”

“Many believers now see the Orthodox religion and Orthodox Church as separate things. It is a big blow and I don't think the church would be able to recover quickly,” he said.

Corrections: An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that Yekaterina Samutsevich is 19 years old. In fact, she is 29 years old. The translation of the name of the song performed by Pussy Riot in Christ the Savior Cathedral on Feb. 21 has also been improved. It has been changed to “Mother of God, Cast Putin Out!” in place of “Holy Mother, Throw Putin Out!”

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