

New York Musicians Come Out for Pussy Riot

By [Xenia Prilepskaya](#)

June 28, 2012



The detention of the punk group has made waves even in the United States, where musicians performed in New York last week to show their support. **Anatoly Kashlevskiy**

Correction appended

NEW YORK — Musicians of Russian-American descent played a concert in New York in support of the jailed Pussy Riot group calling for them to be released from jail.

The benefit concert was organized by Knitting Factory Entertainment, Complete Control NYC Booking and Fair Vote For Russia NYC and supported by Amnesty International, who currently has the case listed on their Human Rights Watchlist.

All the bands' fees were waived so that the funds could be diverted directly to Pussy Riot's legal defense team in Moscow.

The women — Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, 22, Maria Alyokhina, 24, and Yekaterina

Samutsevich, 29 — were arrested in March and charged with "hooliganism motivated by hatred toward a religious group" for performing an anti-Putin song in a Moscow church. The offense is punishable by up to seven years in prison.

One of the organizers, Bryan Swirsky, said he was inspired by the group's punk rebellion.

"When I heard that these women were being persecuted by the authorities, I thought that something needed to be done," Swirsky said.

"The possible punishment for these young women is inadequate to what they did. It makes Russia look more oppressive than, I hope, it is," one of the performers, Alina Simone, said Friday.

✘ "How could they put women in jail! They are not criminals, they are artists, just like me, who wanted to express themselves," said singer Ellina Graypel. "Maybe it was not the best way to do it, maybe I would have done it differently, but people should have the right to express their opinion."

"It looks like the church is not separate from the state in Russia. The church is using the state to impose its opinion and shut up critics," said musician Frank London.

Other events will likely follow with Swirsky saying he hoped to get more support from non-Russian Americans and get a full venue next time.

"Attendance-wise, we didn't do as well as we'd thought we would because we didn't have an attraction for the American side of the community," he said, "There was general understanding in the room that these women need support, even if it's coming from 8,000 miles away. So in this sense I consider the show a success, even if we didn't have slam dunk attendance," he said.

The concert at The Knitting Factory was New York's third Pussy Riot benefit. The first Pussy Riot benefit saw Beastie Boys' Ad-Rock perform a DJ set, making his first public appearance since bandmate Adam Yauch's death in May.

Last week, support for the band expanded when Anti-Flag, a veteran punk rock band from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, covered the song that so enraged the Kremlin and released it on the Internet under the English title "Virgin Mary, Redeem Us of Putin."

Correction: An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that Yekaterina Samutsevich is 19 years old. In fact, she is 29 years old.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/06/28/new-york-musicians-come-out-for-pussy-riot-a15847>