

Rogozin Sparks Firestorm by Calling Madonna a Swearword

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Pussy Riot supporters participating in a music video shot in Berlin for Canadian electro-pop artist Peaches. **Adam Berry**

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin [tweeted](#) an obscene message about Madonna after the U.S. pop singer urged authorities to free the Pussy Riot musicians, provoking a storm of controversy on social networking sites Thursday.

Meanwhile, jailed tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky congratulated one of the arrested punk band members on her birthday, and two events were staged in Berlin to support the jailed trio.

Rogozin, in a post on Twitter late Wednesday, said that "every former w. who has aged wants to give lectures about morals, especially during tours and gigs abroad." He used an abbreviated form of the Russian swearword for whore. He did not elaborate on why he had referred to Madonna, who wears sexually provocative clothing and has appeared nude in movies and books, with such language.

Rogozin's spokeswoman, Lidia Mikhailova, said by phone that there would be no further comment from Rogozin because, first, he was on vacation, and "second, he said all that could be said."

Rogozin's Twitter declaration was quickly reposted by bloggers on Twitter and Facebook, provoking angry comments about both the deputy prime minister and Madonna.

Some said Rogozin was right because Madonna "was once a whore," while others retorted that Rogozin himself was a "whore," apparently referring to his public evolution from an opposition-minded nationalist to a Putin loyalist.

"Better a former w. than a former patriot," Twitter user Andrei Kokarev wrote.

Madonna told Moscow concertgoers on Tuesday night that the Pussy Riot defendants "have done something courageous" and "have paid the price for their act" of denouncing President Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Kirill during a February performance in Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral. "I pray for their freedom," she said.

Madonna was to give a concert in St. Petersburg late Thursday.

The defendants have been under arrest since early March on charges of hooliganism motivated by religious hatred. The verdict is expected Aug. 17 at Moscow's Khamovnichesky District Court. Prosecutors have asked the court to sentence the women — Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, 22; Maria Alyokhina, 24; and Yekaterina Samutsevich, 30 — to three years, while the judge could hand down the maximum seven years allowed by law.

Khodorkovsky, in a [statement](#) posted on his website, offered birthday greetings to Samutsevich, who turned 30 on Thursday. "I would like to hope that your prison experience will end soon," Khodorkovsky said. "The crooks who are asserting themselves at your expense today will suffer defeat."

Khodorkovsky said that he knew from personal experience that Samutsevich was "having a tough time," but "the support of millions of people cheers up, gives strength and, in the end, helps a person to survive."

Reporters and supporters gathered Thursday afternoon outside Detention Center No. 6 on Ulitsa Shosseynaya, in the southeast of Moscow, to mark Samutsevich's birthday.

In Berlin, 121 lawmakers from the Bundestag passed a letter in support of Pussy Riot to the Russian ambassador, Vladimir Grinin, on Wednesday, Radio Liberty [reported](#).

Also Wednesday, Peaches, a Canadian electro-pop performance artist, shot a video clip for a song she wrote in support of Pussy Riot in Berlin's Mauerpark. About 400 volunteers dressed in colorful clothes and wearing balaclavas — attire similar to what the Pussy Riot musicians wore in church — took part in crowd scenes.

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