

Court Unexpectedly Clears Kasparov of Illegally Rallying for Pussy Riot

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Kasparov arriving to attend a Khamovnichesky court hearing Friday. **Sergei Karpukhin**

A Moscow court unexpectedly acquitted opposition leader and chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov of participating in an unauthorized rally in support of the feminist punk band Pussy Riot.

The 49-year-old was speaking to journalists outside the court where the Pussy Riot trial was proceeding Aug. 17 when several riot policemen violently grabbed him and threw him into a police van along with dozens of other protesters.

Four witnesses confirmed that is what happened, Interfax reported.

The Khamovnichesky District Court, where three Pussy Riot members were sentenced to two years in prison, said Friday that police witnesses had not proved that he had taken part in the unsanctioned protest and acquitted him.

“I think it’s a very important day, a historic day, because for the first time in our courts the evidence of a policeman was not accepted just because he wears a uniform,” Kasparov said after the decision.

Courts are notorious for jailing and fining Kremlin critics. The law was recently changed regarding public gatherings to dramatically raise the fine for participation in an unauthorized one to 300,000 rubles (\$9,000).

Kasparov said he planned to file a complaint against his detention and a libel case against his accuser.

Kasparov could still face criminal charges based on a police officer’s accusation that the opposition leader bit him while he was being detained. Police have sent documents about that accusation to federal investigators for review, Interfax said.

Kasparov, considered by some to have been the best player in chess history, leads the United Civil Front opposition group.

✉(AP, Reuters)

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