

Putin Gives First Interview Since Inauguration

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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In his first interview since his May inauguration, President Vladimir Putin spoke to the state-run RT television channel Wednesday about international relations and Pussy Riot.

He said Russia is ready to work with whomever wins the U.S. presidential election in November, in reply to a question about what would happen if Republican Mitt Romney were elected.

"Regardless of whom the American people elect, we will work with them," Putin said. "But we will work together as effectively as our partners want."

Romney has been critical of Russia throughout his campaign. He told CNN earlier this year that Russia is the United States' "No. 1 geopolitical foe."

While some extracts of the RT interview were released Wednesday, the network plans

to broadcast it Thursday at noon in English, Arabic and Spanish ahead of the president's speech at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Vladivostok.

When asked to comment about the armed conflict in Syria, Putin brought up the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. "The United States and its allies once entered Afghanistan. Now they are thinking of how to escape," he said.

The president was terse in response to a question about the imprisonment of three Pussy Riot punk rockers for performing a rambunctious "punk prayer" at a prominent Moscow Cathedral.

"I know what is going on with Pussy Riot, but I'm getting involved," he said.

During their illicit performance, the band had pleaded for the Virgin Mary to "cast Putin out." Supporters denounced the trial as politically tinged.

At the London Olympics last month, Putin said the women should not be punished "too harshly." They were later sentenced to two years in prison.

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