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Pussy Riot Films Dramatic Thank-You Stunt

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A photo of Putin burning after Pussy Riot members ignited it as part of a video thanking supportive musicians.

Members of punk band Pussy Riot have released a video in which they thank musicians Madonna and Bjork for their support of the group while they rappel down the side of an abandoned building and burn a picture of President Vladimir Putin.

The group released the video apparently in response to questions submitted to it by American television network MTV ahead of the MTV Video Music Awards, which aired in the States on Thursday evening.

MTV News said in an article that it had asked Pussy Riot to respond to the prominent musicians around the world who have expressed support for the group, three of whose members were sentenced to two years in prison last month for performing an anti-Putin song in a Moscow church.

In the 1-minute 15-second video, three women wearing the group's trademark colorful balaclavas, short dresses and stockings are shown on the roof of an abandoned concrete building.

The women speak emphatically in English about their fight against the authorities and call Putin and strongman Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko "evil men."

"We've been fighting for the right to sing, to think, to criticize," a woman in a green knit balaclava says to open the video.

"To be musicians and artists, ready to do everything to change our country, no matter the risks," another female voice follows.

The women, while rappelling down the side of the building, thank singers Madonna and Bjork as well as the bands Red Hot Chili Peppers, Green Day and other musicians, for supporting Pussy Riot. Madonna and Red Hot Chili Peppers have expressed support for the women in concerts in Moscow and St. Petersburg in recent months.

The women then condemn Putin and Lukashenko, saying they are intolerant of political opposition and support of gays and lesbians. Two of the women then light flares and burn a photo of Putin hanging from the building.

A member of Green Day wore a "Free Pussy Riot" T-shirt at the MTV Video Music Awards on Thursday, the Los Angeles Times reported. It was unclear whether the latest Pussy Riot video was shown during the Los Angeles ceremony, at which a variety of awards were given out to popular musicians. The video was posted on MTV's website, mtv.com.

Pussy Riot members Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, 22, Maria Alyokhina, 24, and Yekaterina Samutsevich, 30, were sentenced on Aug. 17 by a Moscow court to two years in prison for their February "punk prayer" in Christ the Savior Cathedral in which they denounced Putin and Russian Orthodox Church head Patriarch Kirill.

World-famous musicians have backed the women's right to free speech, and human rights groups and Western governments have condemned their jail sentence as disproportionate.

A group of Russian musicians planned to play at a benefit concert in support of the band in St. Petersburg late Sunday.

Glavclub's owner Igor Tonkikh, the only owner of a large club in the city to agree to host the charity show, asked the organizers to get at least some kind of "permit" from the police that would guarantee the venue would not be shut down on the day of the concert, he said earlier at a news conference.

Tonkikh said he had started receiving threatening calls from the police and other authorities. The police denied they had called the venue and said no permit for holding concerts was needed, Rosbalt reported last week.

DDT, Televizor, Electric Guerillas and Gleb Samoilov signed up to take part, as well as some younger bands who offered to play, but several acts refused to take part, most notably Boris Grebenshchikov of Akvarium.

Separately, Lech Walesa, Poland's Nobel Peace Prize laureate, said he had sent a letter to Putin urging him to release the three band members sentenced last month, Reuters reported Friday.

"I'm not familiar with Russian law, but I'm calling on President Putin to liberate the girls if the law allows that," Walesa, who served as a president of post-Communist Poland, told Reuters in an interview.

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