

Pussy Riot Awarded LennonOno Peace Prize

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Pussy Riot punk rockers posing during a February photoshoot.

Punk group Pussy Riot, three of whose members received prison sentences after railing against authorities in a Moscow cathedral, has been awarded a peace prize dedicated to late Beatles songwriter John Lennon, organizers announced Thursday.

Yoko Ono, Lennon's widow, will hand over the LennonOno Grant for Peace award with the backing of rights organization Amnesty International at a New York ceremony scheduled for Friday.

Organizers said in a statement on their website that they hoped the award would mean that Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alyokhina and Yekaterina Samutsevich, the jailed Pussy Riot rockers, are released as soon as possible.

"Their lengthy trial recently concluded with a two-year jail sentence that has seen strong

international criticism, calling into question Russia's policies toward freedom of speech and freedom of expression," the statement continued.

LennonOno grant organizers will hand the award to Pyotr Verzilov, husband of Tolokonnikova and a member of radical art group Voina, at Friday's ceremony, media reports said.

U.S. activist Rachel Corrie, author John Perkins and journalist Christopher Hitchens are among other winners of this year's LennonOno award.

Meanwhile, Russian police continue to search for Pussy Riot band members who have so far evaded capture. A Moscow court is due to hear a legal appeal against the three women's sentencing on hooliganism charges Oct. 1, when supporters plan to hold a worldwide rally.

International rights groups and celebrities including Sting, Paul McCartney and Madonna have called for the jailed band members' release since police detained them in March.

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