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Samutsevich Threatens Past Pussy Riot Lawyers

By Natalya Krainova

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Samutsevich attending a preliminary hearing Tuesday on whether to ban footage of a Pussy Riot performance. **Mikhail Metzel**

Yekaterina Samutsevich, the Pussy Riot rocker released from jail last month, is thinking about requesting that three of the band's former lawyers be stripped of their licenses, her new lawyer told Kommersant.

Sergei Badamshin said in an interview published Tuesday that the past lawyers — Violeta Volkova, Mark Feigin and Nikolai Polozov — did not return personal belongings to Samutsevich by Monday as she requested in a Nov. 11 letter to the counselors.

On Monday, Volkova, Feigin and Polozov severed ties with the band because, they said, the publicity they had attracted to the case could harm their clients.

Badamshin said Volkova, who was fired by Samutsevich in October but continued to represent

two other jailed members of the band, had failed to return Samutsevich's passport and keys to her apartment and hand over a response from the European Court of Human Rights.

Samutsevich told Dozhd TV late Monday that she had seen her passport in Volkova's hands on March 16, when a city court sanctioned her arrest.

In Twitter comments, Feigin accused Samutsevich of waging a "defamation campaign organized by the authorities" and said the three counselors would hold a news conference about the issue in the coming days.

Polozov, also on Twitter, said Samutsevich's allegations were a "farce" and "part of an agreement that allowed her to break free of the case."

Badamshin said in the interview that the request to disbar the lawyers is "an extreme measure that we would not like to be driven to."

Although the lawyers repeatedly said they were defending the Pussy Riot members free of charge, a former aide to self-exiled London businessman Boris Berezovsky said in a Snob interview that the counselors had deducted $1,000 a month from a fund in support of the band over a seven- to 8 1/2-month period.

But Feigin said on Twitter that Samutsevich had reportedly received thousands of dollars from the fund and sarcastically hinted that it could have been a "reward," an apparent jab at her release while two other band members remain in jail.

Volkova tweeted, in an apparent reference to the falling-out, that "the story with 30 silver coins ended on a fig tree," an allusion to the biblical figure Judas, who betrayed Jesus for 30 silver coins and then hanged himself from a tree.

Samutsevich was released in early October after she fired Volkova and pleaded partially guilty to charges of hooliganism motivated by religious hatred over a February performance at Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral that denounced President Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Kirill.

The court replaced the two-year prison term for Samutsevich with a suspended sentence. The two other performers — Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, 23, and Maria Alyokhina, 24, both of whom pleaded not guilty — were convicted and started serving similar terms in late October.

On Monday, the band's lawyers said they were terminating their contracts with Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina, who will be represented by Irina Khrunova, the lawyer who successfully argued for Samutsevich's release.

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