The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Imprisoned Pussy Riot Member Hospitalized

January 31, 2013



Members of the group posing for a photoshoot in 2012.

A jailed member of the Pussy Riot feminist punk band has been hospitalized and had complained of headaches and of suffering from overwork at a prison colony known for its tough conditions, a fellow band member said Friday.

An official confirmed that Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, who is serving a two-year sentence for an irreverent protest against President Vladimir Putin in Moscow's main cathedral, is in a hospital at her prison colony in Mordovia in western Russia.

But Federal Prison Service spokeswoman Kristina Belousova declined to specify her illness or comment on her condition, only saying it was "nothing serious." She did not say when exactly Tolokonnikova was admitted, but said it happened recently.

Yekaterina Samutsevich, a band member who also was sentenced to two years in August but later released on appeal, added that during their trial Tolokonnikova said she was suffering from headaches and the judge ignored it. Samutsevich said that Tolokonnikova feels

exhausted after working long hours with little sleep.

"They don't allow her to have any rest. She works almost round-the-clock," Samutsevich told independent Rain TV on Friday. "She said she feels tired, extremely tired."

Pyotr Verzilov, Tolokonnikova's husband, said the hospitalization was connected with an appointment Tolokonnikova had been scheduled to have before she was sent to the colony, rather than a specific illness. "Obviously, the conditions aren't that great," he said, "but her lawyer's dealing with it."

In an interview published last week in the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper, Tolokonnikova stoically described harsh prison conditions, saying she did not expect any leniency from authorities.

Tolokonnikova, who works at a sewing machine like most female prisoners in Russia's prison colonies, told the paper that she has had her fingers punctured by the needle but has picked up speed and experience and can now meet her quota of making lining for 320 jackets a day. Like other prisoners, she bathes once a week and uses cold water to wash the rest of the week.

"I am not paying much attention to living conditions," she said in an interview filmed in December. "I'm ascetic, and living conditions matter little for me."

Tolokonnikova said she meditates to prevent her spirit from being dulled by the monotonous labor and added that the main thing she misses at her prison colony is the ability to read freely.

Tolokonnikova, Samutsevich and the third band member, Maria Alekhina, were found guilty of hooliganism motivated by religious hatred in August after they raucously prayed to the Virgin Mary for the deliverance from Putin at Christ the Savior Cathedral.

Samutsevich was freed in October, but the two others were sent to prison colonies. The verdict has drawn global outrage, highlighting Russia's intolerance of dissent.

Related articles:

- Pussy Riot Video Banned for 'Extremism'
- Church Suspends Priest Who Supported Pussy Riot
- Court Turns Down Pussy Riot Appeal

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/01/31/imprisoned-pussy-riot-member-hospitalized-a21156