

Police Storm Pussy Riot Play

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The  Moscow Times

Moscow police interrupted a play featuring the trial of punk rockers Pussy Riot on Sunday and warned its Swiss director for violating visa rules, in what a government critic said was part of an anti-Western campaign.

Federal Migration Service officers delayed the performance of "Moscow Trials" at a theater at Moscow's Sakharov Center for an hour as they issued a verbal warning to director Milo Rau, according to news agency Interfax and website Publicpost.ru.

The play features three recent trials in Russia, including one that ended in August with jail terms for "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred" for three members of the Pussy Riot band for staging a profanity-laced protest in Moscow's main cathedral last February.

The band members, one of whom was later released on appeal, said the protest was meant to draw attention to close ties between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Kremlin.

The migration officials raiding "Moscow Trials" were accompanied by Cossacks,

a traditionalist group whose recent revival has been encouraged by Putin, according to Publicpost.ru and Twitter reports from the scene.

No formal punishment was imposed on Rau for allegedly violating visa conditions, Interfax quoted Sergei Kalyuzhny, the Federal Migration Service's deputy head as saying.

"He entered [Russia] on a business visa, which does not allow any working activity," Kalyuzhny said.

Putin's return to the presidency last year was soured by the biggest political protest over the past decade, which analysts say led the Kremlin to ramp up nationalist rhetoric.

Pussy Riot band member Nadezhda Tolokonnikova was sent to solitary confinement for 15 days in a punishment that her supporters say is meant to prevent her from winning early release. Prison officials at Mordovia colony No. 14 sentenced Tolokonnikova to 15 days as punishment for going to the prison's medical center without being accompanied by a guard, her lawyer Oleg Nevlyutov said Saturday.

Material from The Moscow Times is included in this report.

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