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Paul McCartney Asks for Release of Pussy Riot Musicians

By The Moscow Times

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Ex-Beatle Paul McCartney has written letters to Russian authorities in support of two members of the punk group Pussy Riot jailed last August on charges of hooliganism motivated by religious hatred, his website said.

The musician has asked the authorities to consider release on parole for Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, who are serving two-year sentences for performing a "punk prayer" against President Vladimir Putin in the Christ the Savior Cathedral in central Moscow in February 2012.

"In the great tradition of fair-mindedness which the Russian people (many of whom are my friends) are famous for, I believe that you granting this request would send a very positive message to all the people who have followed this case," McCartney wrote in a letter regarding Alyokhina.

"I have had a long relationship with the Russian people, and, with this in mind, I am making the following request in a spirit of friendship for my many Russian acquaintances who, like me, believe in treating people — all people, with compassion and kindness," he wrote in a letter regarding Tolokonnikova.

Alyokhina, 24, declared a hunger strike on Wednesday after a Perm court denied her access to her parole appeal hearing, while Tolokonnikova, 23, was denied parole by a Mordovia court in April.

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