

Jailed Pussy Riot Member Denied Parole Again

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Maria Alyokhina appearing on a television screen during her parole hearing at a court in Perm on Wednesday. **Gennady Novik**

Imprisoned Pussy Riot member Maria Alyokhina was denied parole for a second time Wednesday, a decision her lawyer called "legally unfounded," the RAPSI legal news agency reported.

Alyokhina was sentenced to two years in jail last August on hooliganism charges for participating in a "punk prayer" against Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency. The unauthorized performance by the balaclava-wearing punk rockers took place in Moscow's main cathedral in February 2012.

In May this year, her request for parole was denied by the Perm Region's Bereznikovsky Court after prison officials said she was "deliberately" breaking prison rules.

The Perm Regional Court upheld that decision Wednesday.

Alyokhina's lawyer, Irina Khrunova, was quoted by RAPSI as saying that "the prosecutors' position is legally unfounded." She pledged to appeal.

Another Pussy Riot member, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, was denied parole in April. She and Alyokhina are due to be released in early March next year, having been in custody since their arrest in March 2012.

The third convicted band member, Yekaterina Samutsevich, was released on probation last October.

Rights group Amnesty International condemned Wednesday's decision as a "further travesty of justice."

In a separate statement Tuesday, the London-based advocacy group said that more than 100 internationally acclaimed musicians had called on Russian authorities to release Alyokhina and Tolokonnikova. The open letter was signed by such celebrities as Sir Paul McCartney, Madonna, Radiohead and Sting.

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