

Greenpeace Denies Piracy Charge

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Greenpeace has dismissed suggestions by a Russian agency that its activists engaged in piracy while attempting to board an offshore drilling platform owned by state natural gas company Gazprom.

Greenpeace International's general counsel Jasper Teulings said in a statement Saturday that the Investigative Committee's announcement that it was formally considering charges of piracy for the group was not valid and "smacks of desperation."

Since the Greenpeace ship was stormed by Russia's Coast Guard in Arctic waters Thursday, Greenpeace has been unable to reach it by phone. The activists remain aboard the vessel, which is being towed to the nearest port, Murmansk. The Federal Security Service said the Amsterdam-registered ship was being towed to Murmansk but might not arrive until Monday. It said there were 27 people on board, including four Russian citizens.

Presidential Chief of Staff Sergei Ivanov told journalists in Stockholm on Saturday that Greenpeace had "acted too radically" and compared its protest to "Somalian-style piracy."

Greenpeace said armed coastguards had forcibly boarded and seized the Arctic Sunrise ship on Thursday, a day after two activists were plucked from the side of the Prirazlomnaya rig, owned by the state-controlled energy giant Gazprom, and arrested.

The regional unit of the Investigative Committee said it was considering bringing charges of piracy, which could carry a sentence of up to 15 years in jail.

The FSB denied the environmental campaign group's assertion that the ship had been in international waters when it was seized.

Greenpeace, which aimed to draw attention to the threat to the fragile Arctic ecosystem from expanding oil drilling, said that it had had no contact with the crew in many hours and that law enforcement officers had damaged the ship's communications equipment.

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