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Greenpeace Vows to Appeal Activists' Detention

By Yekaterina Kravtsova

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A protester holding a sign in support of Denis Sinyakov in front of the Investigative Committee's Moscow office. **Tatyana Makeyeva**

Lawyers for the more than 20 detained Greenpeace activists who took part in a protest near a Russian oil platform in the Arctic earlier this month have said they intend to appeal the arrests, which they said were followed by serious violations of procedural rules.

A court in Murmansk on Sunday jailed six more activists in the case, bringing the total number of those detained up to 28. On Thursday, the same court ordered the detention of the U.S. captain of the Greenpeace ship Arctic Sunrise and of 19 environmental activists along with a photographer and a videographer after the activists tried to place a Greenpeace banner on the Prirazlomnaya oil platform in the Barents Sea as a protest against oil production in the Arctic.

No one of the 30-member team, which consists of people of 18 nationalities, has been

officially charged yet, but Russian authorities said their actions were a deliberate provocation and could be considered piracy, because they could have affected the work of the Prirazlomnaya platform and endangered the lives of people working there.

"These detentions are like the Russian oil industry itself: a relic from an earlier era. Our peaceful activists are in prison for shining a light on Gazprom's recklessness," Greenpeace International executive director Kumi Naidoo said in a statement published Friday.

At a press conference in Moscow on Friday, the head of a temporary Greenpeace office in Murmansk, Dmitry Artamonov, said via video link that Thursday's hearing — which lasted 15 hours with no breaks was an "unprecedented violation of procedural norms," because the activists were not provided with adequate translators and could not fully participate in the defense process.

"Everyone understands that their detention is illegal, but even the detention procedure is full of so many violations that we do not know which of them to appeal first," he said.

A team of armed coast guard officers forcibly boarded the Arctic Sunrise on Sept. 19, locked the activists in a lower deck and searched the ship, seizing computers, telephones and other electronic equipment, Artamonov said. The officers gave them no chance to contact their families or Greenpeace offices, he said.

On Sept. 23, the ship was brought to Murmansk, and the next day the activists were officially taken into custody. "The activists were told that they had five minutes to get ready to leave the ship and that they would leave it for just a day and then they could come back," Artamonov said.

When the activists were interrogated, they were not provided with lawyers and interpreters, and consuls of about 10 countries from which the activists hailed were barred from visiting them, he said.

Daniel Simons, a lawyer for Greenpeace International who is also currently in Murmansk, said the Dutch government, whose flag the Arctic Sunrise sailed under, would likely file a complaint to a body he called the nternational maritime court of arbitration.

"This is a measure of last resort, but Holland is starting to lose patience," Simons said, adding that it was illegal to board the Arctic Sunrise in international waters.

Lawyer Anton Beneslavsky said that the activists were aware they had violated the law when approaching the oil platform but that their actions could be qualified only as an administrative offense, not a criminal one.

Artamonov emphasized that the activists' actions could not have disturbed the work of the oil platform in any way and that the behavior of the Russian Coast Guard was more dangerous.

"To say that several ropes and a banner could be a threat to the ice platform is either absurd, or Gazprom should take urgent measures to ensure the safety of their platform," he said.

"For divers who, according to Gazprom, were under water at that moment, the Russian Coast Guard officers who were shooting in the water to intimidate Greenpeace activists were

of more danger," he said.

Investigators began their inspection of the ship on Saturday with the captain and his lawyer present, Interfax reported.

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