

# Pussy Riot, in NYC, Critiques Conditions in Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Pussy Riot members Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova speaking at a news conference Tuesday. **Shannon Stapleton**

NEW YORK — Americans who will be at the Winter Olympics should look beyond the facilities created for the Games and take a hard look at the host country, two members of the Russian protest punk band Pussy Riot said.

Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova made their first public appearance in the U.S. on Tuesday, arriving to take part in Amnesty International's "Bringing Human Rights Home" concert on Wednesday in Brooklyn. Madonna will introduce them.

The women were released in December after nearly two years in prison following a conviction for hooliganism when they staged a protest in a Russian church, wearing balaclavas and screaming lyrics.

They have been critical of President Vladimir Putin and political conditions in their homeland, and blasted their release as an attempt to quiet criticism of human rights issues in Russia before the games in Sochi, which open Friday.

Alyokhina, speaking Russian as Tolokonnikova's husband translated into English, said Americans, including President Barack Obama, should look past the buildings erected for the Games.

"These objects have no relation to Russia, they are foreign objects in Russia," she said. "The only thing which connects these objects to the country is taxpayer money which has been stolen and which has been used to build these Olympic objects."

Speaking through her husband, Tolokonnikova said that Obama should "not be afraid to publicly say your thoughts about what you feel is happening in Russia once you are there, during your next visit."

The women said their goal is to work toward bringing more transparency to Russian politics and the Russian prison system.

The concert is the first Amnesty International has held since its "Human Rights Concerts" from 1986 to 1998, whose performers included Bruce Springsteen, Sting and Peter Gabriel, among others.

Other acts scheduled to take part in Wednesday's concert are Imagine Dragons, The Flaming Lips, Lauryn Hill, The Fray, Tegan and Sara and Colbie Caillat.

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