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Bolotnaya Case Suspect Pleads Guilty

By The Moscow Times

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Yelena Kokhtaryova

A woman has pleaded guilty to participating in alleged riots and using violence against police at an anti-Kremlin rally in 2012, a volunteer group providing legal support for defendants in the so-called Bolotnaya case said Tuesday.

The case concerns the May 6, 2012, opposition rally on Bolotnaya Ploshchad in Moscow, which ended in violent clashes between protesters and police. The opposition has argued that the case is politically motivated, denied that riots took place at the rally and maintained that there is no evidence proving that the defendants assaulted police officers.

Yelena Kokhtaryova, a 58 year-old pensioner on whom travel restrictions have been imposed, is accused of throwing bottles at police officers and trying to push them away from a demonstrator they had detained.

Kokhtaryova agreed to admit her guilt as part of a plea bargain, which means that her case will be considered in a trial separate from all other suspects and without the assessment

of evidence, the Rosuznik volunteer group said. She faces up to 8 ½ years in prison.

Of the case's original 29 suspects, two have struck plea deals with the police and one has been sentenced to mandatory psychiatric treatment. Currently, 14 suspects are under arrest or house arrest and eight have been granted amnesty.

Human rights activists have accused Russian authorities of pressuring the defendants into pleading guilty and using plea bargains to bypass due process, comparing them to Josef Stalin's show trials in the 1930s. They have also argued that the plea deals were used to prove that the alleged riots did in fact that place so that they can convict those who haven't plead guilty.

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