

Pussy Riot Releases New Video Slamming Sochi Games

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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SOCHI — Members of protest group Pussy Riot released a new music video Thursday criticizing Russia's staging of the Winter Olympics and its human rights record, in a rare show of dissent during the Games.

The video, posted on the group's website, shows the women wearing their trademark brightly colored ski masks pulled down over their faces, and singing and playing instruments in front of the Olympic symbol.

It also includes clips from an incident on Wednesday in Sochi, where the Feb. 7 to 23 Winter Games are being held, when Cossacks beat members of the group with a whip as they tried to perform a song beside a wall covered in the Sochi Games logos.

Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, two band members who were jailed until late December for a protest against President Vladimir Putin in a Moscow church, were involved

in the video, which was called "Putin will teach you how to love the motherland."

"The Olympics have created a space for the complete destruction of human rights in Russia," Tolokonnikova told reporters Thursday at a news conference in Sochi.

"They have banned us from speaking. The rights of everyone are banned — political activists, LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] activists and anyone who has an alternative opinion."

The pair had been serving two-year jail terms for hooliganism motivated by religious hatred after performing a profanity-laced protest song against Putin in Moscow's main Russian Orthodox cathedral in February 2012.

They were released from prison on Dec. 23 under an amnesty that Tolokonnikova said was a stunt by Putin to improve Russia's image before the Olympics. They recently returned to Russia after a tour through Europe and the U.S.

Western governments said the sentences were disproportionate, and Kremlin critics called the trial part of a clampdown on dissent during Putin's third presidential term.

One of the women's main aims was to draw attention to the trial of a group of Russians charged with organizing "riots" following protests on the eve of Putin's inauguration for a third term as president in May 2012.

The protesters who are on trial are due to be sentenced in Moscow on Friday and face up to 10 years in prison if found guilty. Several others accused in connection with the protest have been cleared under an amnesty Putin engineered in December.

The two women and other Pussy Riot members have been detained several times by police during the Winter Olympics, attracting considerable international media attention.

"From the first day we arrived [in Sochi], we have been arrested every day without reason," Alyokhina said. "I do not think any other state would have acted with us like they have."

The buildup to the Games was overshadowed by an outcry over Russian legislation banning the promotion of homosexuality among minors, which critics say curtails the rights of gays in Russia.

There were also allegations of widespread corruption connected with staging the Games, which some estimates say cost \$51 billion, making them the most expensive ever held.

Putin has said the law is aimed at protecting minors and dismissed allegations of major corruption. Some Russian officials also dispute the cost estimate.

The International Olympic Committee, or IOC, said it was concerned about the Games being used for political purposes.

"Like many people, I found the [Pussy Riot] video very unsettling," IOC spokesman Mark Adams said in Sochi.

"It is a shame the Olympics are used as a political platform. We ask that the Olympics are not used as a platform to express political views, and we continue to say that."

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