

Moscow Court Reduces Pussy Riot Sentences

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The Moscow City Court on Friday reduced the two-year jail sentences handed down to Pussy Riot members Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina in 2012.

The court ruled that the anti-Putin song the women performed in a Moscow church in February 2012 was not intended to "incite hatred against a social group" and that a one-month reduction in their sentences was warranted.

The decision has no practical implications, given that they have already been released. Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina were freed three months early as part of a presidential amnesty in December 2013.

Furthermore, the ruling does not rescind their convictions for hooliganism.

On Friday, the court also took a month off the two-year suspended sentence given to Yekaterina Samutsevich, a third band member who was at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior on the day of the "punk prayer."

Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina's lawyer Dmitry Dinze was not satisfied by Friday's outcome and said that the sentences given to his clients should be revoked due to a lack of evidence.

The court said in its initial ruling in August 2012 that Pussy Riot "had been driven by hatred against a social group," but Dinze said this was inaccurate as Orthodox believers are not a social group.

Dinze did not rule out lodging an appeal against the decision, and added that the case was also being considered by the European Court of Human Rights.

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