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Federalism Activist Gets Jail For Demanding Same Regional Rights Russia Wants in Ukraine

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Activist Darya Polyudova

While Russia calls for a broader autonomy for eastern Ukraine, it has jailed a domestic activist for advocating the same kind of federalization rights for a southern Russian region, media reported Tuesday.

Activist Darya Polyudova, who participates in a leftist political movement, was charged with separatism and placed in pretrial detention soon after she finished serving a previous two-week sentence over a rally for broader autonomy for the Krasnodar region, Grani.ru reported.

Grani.ru said it was the first time that Russia has brought charges under a new law that took effect this year criminalizing calls for separatism. The rally organizers' page on the VKontakte social network calls for broader economic autonomy and self-governance rights for their

region, but makes no demands for succession.

Polyudova was first detained during the mid-August rally in Krasnodar along with several fellow protesters, after what Grani.ru and the Novaya Gazeta newspaper described as "provocations" by pro-Kremlin activists who supposedly accosted protesters to incite a brawl.

Her two-week sentence for "hooliganism" ran out at the end of the month, but she appeared to have never walked out of prison nor made any contact with her friends and family, who thought she had gone missing, Novaya Gazeta reported.

Members of the region's Public Monitoring Commission, a prisoners' rights watchdog, managed to locate Polyudova a couple of days later, saying she had been transferred to another jail supposedly run by the local branch of the Federal Security Service (FSB), a successor agency of the Soviet KGB, Novaya Gazeta reported.

Commission member Yelena Malina said Polyudova has been charged with "appeals for violating the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation" under the new law, the report said.

"Investigators are obligated to specify in detention reports that relatives have been notified about the detainee's whereabouts or grant the right to a telephone call," Malina said, according to the report. "I don't have any information about this having been done."

A new rally for the "Federalization of Kuban," a tsarist-era term for an area that includes most of the Krasnodar region and parts of nearby lands, has been rescheduled for early October, according to organizers' VKontakte page.

Protesters want the region to keep a share of resort revenue taxes, form local self-governance bodies that would be "more independent" from Moscow, and protect the "residents of Kuban whose rights are being violated, including the rights of ethnic Ukrainians."

Protesters also said they would be exercising their right to "federalization" protected by the Constitution of the country, whose formal name is the Russian Federation.

The page also displays a logo of the "Kuban People's Republic," a name echoing the rebel "people's republics" in eastern Ukraine whose calls for autonomy Russia supports.

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