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Moscow Court Jails Protesters Over Rally in Support of Ukrainian Pilot

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The series of hearings on Tuesday followed a dozen-strong protest the night before at Moscow's Lubyanka Square, where Russia's Security Services have their headquarters, the Grani.ru news site reported.

Protesters attending the rally unfurled banners that read: "Freedom to Nadezhda Savchenko, freedom to political prisoners," and "Freedom to Nadezhda," according to a video posted by Grani on YouTube.

Eleven protesters were detained for participating in the unauthorized gathering, police monitoring news portal OVD-Info reported. Their sentences ranged from fines to 45 days

in jail for an activist found guilty of "repeat violations" of a law banning unauthorized gatherings, according to Grani.

Russia's leading human rights group Memorial added Savchenko to its list of political prisoners last year, and this week her lawyer appealed to President Vladimir Putin to release her, saying she may die in the detention center where she has been on hunger strike for more than six weeks.

Savchenko was captured last June by Moscow-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, and transferred to Russia, where she is now awaiting trial on charges of abetting in the killing of Russian journalists.

Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko told Poland's TVN24 television in an interview published Tuesday that he had written to Putin on Sunday, demanding the "withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine," rebel commitment to a cease-fire and Savchenko's release.

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