The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Pussy Riot Appeals to European Court Over Russia's Failure to Punish Men Who Whipped Them

By Jennifer Monaghan

May 25, 2015



Pussy Riot members Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina were assaulted last February by several men wearing traditional Cossack attire as they tried to perform “Putin Will Teach You to Love the Motherland.”

Two members of the female protest group Pussy Riot have appealed to the European Court of Human Rights after Russian police failed to prosecute a group of men who attacked them with a whip and pepper spray in front of witnesses last year, a news report said Monday.

Pussy Riot members Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina were assaulted last February by several men wearing traditional Cossack attire as they tried to perform "Putin Will Teach You to Love the Motherland" — a song that mocked Russian President Vladimir Putin — in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, which was at the time hosting the Winter Olympic Games.

Videos of the incident subsequently posted online show the Cossacks — members of a quasi-militant group who now present themselves as guardians of traditional values — using a whip and pepper spray to break up the performance. Another activist, Alexei Nekrasov, was left with a bleeding face after being held facedown on the concrete, while Tolokonnikova's husband Pyotr Verzilov and artist Lusine Dzhanyan were also injured in the attack.

Despite the incident being witnessed and captured on video and the police arriving promptly at the scene, no one was ever prosecuted for the attack itself, though one of the men was fined for disrupting public order, the Vedomosti newspaper reported.

The five victims have now appealed to Europe's highest court with a complaint against Russian law enforcement authorities, who they say failed to adequately investigate the attack against them, the report said.

Pussy Riot rose to prominence in 2012 when Tolokonnikova, Alyokhina and a third member, Yekaterina Samutsevich, were handed two-year prison sentences for an anti-Putin performance in Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral.

Samutsevich had her sentenced commuted to a suspended one a month later on appeal, while Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina were freed under presidential amnesty in December 2013 — about two months before they were due for release.

Contact the author at j.monaghan@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/05/25/pussy-riot-appeals-to-european-court-over-russias-failure-to-punish-men-who-whipped-them-a46834