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Pussy Riot Activists Detained During Prison Protests

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Masha Alekhina Facebook

Activists with the anti-Putin punk band Pussy Riot were briefly detained on Monday after unfolding a banner and letting off flares in support of political prisoners in eastern Russia, the Zona.media news outlet reported.

Pussy Riot's Maria Alekhina and Olga Borisova were detained in Yakutsk for picketing the detention center where Ukrainian film director Oleg Sentsov is currently serving a sentence on terror charges. The two women were charged with holding an unauthorized rally.

Alekhina and Borisova hung a banner reading "Free Sentsov" on a bridge near the labor camp No.1 on Sunday while letting off blue and red flares.

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“The case of Sentsov and Kolchenko is one of the most important key political cases in the history of our country,” Alekhina told the news organization founded by Pussy Riot member Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, in reference to another Ukrainian held in Russia on terror charges.

Oleg Sentsov was sentenced in August 2015 to 20 years in prison for planning terrorist attacks on the Crimean peninsula and arms illegal trafficking. He is serving his term in Yakutsk, in eastern Siberia. The ruling met with criticism from human rights groups and film makers around the globe.

Heather McGill, a researcher at Amnesty International, said the trial was designed to "send a message," adding it was "fatally flawed and credible allegations of torture and other ill-treatment have been ignored by the court.”

Alexander Kolchenko, a Ukrainian activist, was sentenced to 10 years on terror charges and is currently being held in a detention center in the town of Kopeisk in the Urals.

Pussy Riot rose to prominence in 2012 when Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria 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.

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