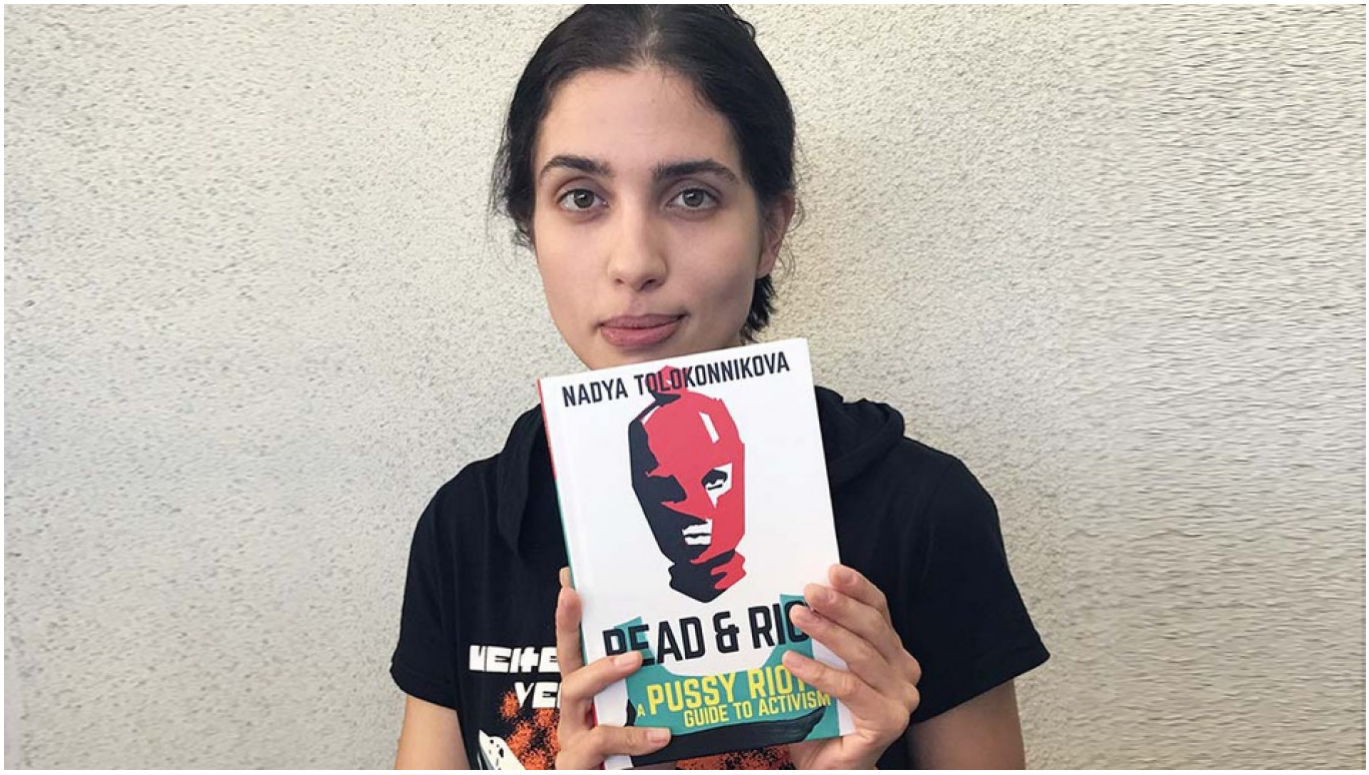
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Nadya Tolokonnikova Resists Hollywood

The Pussy Riot rocker talks prison reform in L.A.

By Ali Sar

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Nadya Tolokonnikova **Ali Sar / MT**

HOLLYWOOD—Nadya Tolokonnikova is on a mission to spread the word of civil disobedience.

The Russian political activist, artist, and co-founder of the punk group "Pussy Riot" brought readers in the motion-picture colony "a guerrilla guide to radical protest and joyful political resistance."

Los Angeles was the last stop on the American tour to promote her book, "Read & Riot: A Pussy Riot Guide to Activism." Her trip included stops in several major U.S. cities, including New York and San Francisco.

The book, published in the U.S. by Harper Collins, is described "as a timely guide to radical protest and provides the words, actions and inspiration to ignite the power of individuals to passionately resist and proactively plan" for the future.

In 2012 Tolokonnikova was sentenced to two years' imprisonment following an unauthorized performance in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior. Since then prison reform has been in the forefront of Tolokonnikova's activities.

"We are managing to release a few dozen prisoners a year, which is pretty big for the Russian prison system," she told The Moscow Times in an interview, adding, "We are working with terminally ill prisoners since there are a lot of them and they are entitled to go free."

The process is onerous, she said. "You have to go to courts, including the European Court of Human Rights, in order to get them released."

"We contact different prisons in other countries and we collect information about what is possible," she continued. "We learn how others deal with similar problems."

In an island prison in Norway, "The inmates are free to roam around, play guitars, for example, and even make their own records," she said.

In her book she cites China as "a good example of what can happen under a secretive government. There is very little information about incarceration in China. No one knows the real figure for executions…China has its own war on drugs and executes smugglers," she writes.

The punk rocker offers an assortment of "do it yourself" tips in the book, including "Don't give up easy. Resist. Organize." She also advises: "Break out from prison."

Tolokonnikova's stop in Hollywood was only to promote her book. "I don't want to have a career (in entertainment). I am not a Hollywood-hungry person at all," she told The Moscow Times.

"We appeared in the TV show 'House of Cards' once and it was fun," she said. "And when it's a political thing and when it's meaningful for me as an activist, then I am more than happy to take part and I am ready to use this medium."

Judging by the interest in her book readings, Hollywood seemed happy to accept her on those terms.

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