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Hollywood Backs Campaign to Drop Charges Against Pussy Riot

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Detained Pussy Riot member Maria Alekhina. **Moscow City Court / TASS**

A group of high-profile Hollywood celebrities has signed a letter calling on the Russian government to halt the prosecution of punk protest group Pussy Riot members Maria Alekhina and Ludmila Shtein, entertainment news site Deadline reported on Tuesday.

The activists face up to two years in prison for Instagram posts demanding the release of political prisoners following the jailing of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

"These baseless charges are part of the Russian government's campaign to silence activists and discourage people from further protests stirred by corruption and the unfair and politically motivated imprisonment of Aleksei Navalny," said the letter, written by Pussy Riot member Nadya Tolokonnikova, who herself spent almost two years in jail on "hooliganism" charges.

Related article: Pussy Riot Member Jailed for Anti-Police Brutality Protest

The letter was signed by actors and film directors including Martin Sheen, Whoopi Goldberg, Spike Jonze, Marina Abramovic, Mike Farrell and Mia Farrow.

“The international community of artists and human rights advocates around the world will continue to monitor their situation and press your government until you withdraw their cases,” the letter concluded.

In 2012, pop queen Madonna spoke out in support of Pussy Riot when members, including Tolokonnikova, were on trial for a provocative anti-Putin performance in one of Moscow’s main cathedrals.

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