The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Court Rejects Appeal of Jailed Theatre Director

By AFP

May 30, 2023



Theatre director Yevgenia Berkovich at her appeal hearing at the Moscow City Court. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

A Moscow court on Tuesday refused to release a theatre director and a playwright detained over their award-winning play about Russian women recruited online to marry radical Islamists in Syria.

Director Yevgeniya Berkovich and author Svetlana Petriychuk are accused of "justifying terrorism" and face up to seven years in prison over their play "Finist, the Brave Falcon."

The accusation is based on a report that also says the play promotes "radical feminism" — a term increasingly used against political opponents.

A Moscow court confirmed the two would remain in pre-trial detention until the beginning of July.

Some of their supporters came to the court in a show of solidarity.

Berkovich, who has written emotional poems against Moscow's Ukraine offensive, asked to be released pending trial, but a Moscow court threw out her appeal.

Related article: Support Pours In for Jailed Russian Playwright and Director

A mother to two adopted teenage daughters, she said she feared her children might suffer "severe psychiatric breakdown" as a result of separation.

"I did not commit any crime," said Berkovich, who appeared in court via video-link and wore a grey T-shirt. "My job is to stage performances."

She said she was not a flight risk because she had vulnerable children at home.

"I am talking about human things," she said.

Berkovich stressed that the play received funding from the Culture Ministry.

"You think the ministry gave some rubles to make terrorism propaganda?" she said.

"They are judging a work of art," Berkovich's lawyer Ksenia Karpinskaya told the hearing.

"Dostoyevsky would have been in prison because his 'Crime and Punishment' is about a maniac who killed an old woman," she added.

Berkovich was a student of Kirill Serebrennikov, one of Russia's most innovative and successful directors.

Serebrennikov left the country after Russian President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine last year.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/05/30/russian-court-rejects-appeal-of-jailed-theatre-director-a81330