

Russian Military Court Extends Playwright, Director's Pre-Trial Detention by 6 Months

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Theater director Zhenya Berkovich and playwright Svetlana Petriychuk. **Alexander Zemlianichenko / AP / TASS**

A Russian military court on Friday [extended](#) the pre-trial detention of theater director Yevgenia Berkovich and playwright Svetlana Petriychuk by six months on charges of “justifying terrorism.”

Berkovich and Petriychuk face up to seven years in prison if found guilty. They were charged over the content of their award-winning play, “Finist the Brave Falcon,” which is about Russian women who fall in love with Islamist militants.

Both artists, who were arrested on May 4, 2023, deny their guilt.

Moscow’s Second Western Military Garrison Court upheld the prosecution’s request to keep Berkovich and Petriychuk in pre-trial detention until Oct. 22, according to the independent

news website Mediazona.

“Tomorrow will be a year since we were arrested,” Petriychuk reportedly said before the ruling. “I’ve never violated any traffic rules in my life. I’ve never been prosecuted, so I don't understand why it’s ‘clear’ to the prosecutor that I could abscond.”

Berkovich, a mother to two adopted teenage daughters, has repeated her request to be placed under house arrest instead, fearing her children might suffer a “psychological breakdown” in her absence.

“They’re smart, they made it through this year. But, for a sick child, this ‘making through’ is always followed by payback they don’t deserve,” she was quoted as saying before the judge denied her request.

The court is expected to name the trial date at its next hearing next Tuesday, according to Mediazona.

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