

Pussy Riot Case Enters Next Stage

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Demonstrators display a purple balloon decorated to resemble masks worn by members of Pussy riot during a rally in support of the group's jailed members. **Dmitry Abramov**

Clarification appended

The preliminary investigation of the Pussy Riot affair has been completed, allowing the defense to begin examining evidence against the women accused in the case.

"We have received an official statement indicating that the preliminary investigation is done, so now we can start getting acquainted with the case materials," Pussy Riot lawyer Nikolai Polozov told the Rapsi news agency Monday.

The three members of the punk group in custody, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alyokhina and Yekaterina Samutsevich, will face charges of hooliganism by an organized group by prior conspiracy and motivated by religious hatred, said second lawyer for the women, Mark Feigin. "It is very serious — up to seven years in prison," Feigin said.

The women were arrested following an impromptu concert by their all-female punk group, Pussy Riot, at the Christ the Savior Cathedral in February, dividing public opinion about what

should happen to them. They have been refused release and are currently in police custody while awaiting trial.

Patriarch Kirill called the women's masked performance of a song called "Mother of God, Cast Putin Out!" an "abomination," and Russian Orthodox Church figures have called for the women to be punished.

Human rights defenders and opposition activists, meanwhile, have said the women were being treated unfairly, and Amnesty International has called the women prisoners of conscience.

Clarification: The translation of the name of the song performed by Pussy Riot in Christ the Savior Cathedral on Feb. 21 has been improved. It has been changed to "Mother of God, Cast Putin Out!" in place of "Holy Mother, Throw Putin Out!"

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