

Activist Abandons Plan to Seek Asylum

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Opposition activist Anastasia Rybachenko has dropped her plans to request political asylum in Germany and said she will return to Russia in September.

“I won’t ask for asylum and have left the eurozone,” Rybachenko [wrote](#) Wednesday on Twitter.

She said she would return home in September to join planned mass anti-government protests. “This is our chance to get the authorities to drop all criminal charges against the opposition,” she wrote.

Rybachenko, 20, said last week that she would seek refugee status in Western Europe after investigators searched her parents’ apartment and presented police files that she said would make it easy to accuse her of instigating violence during the May 6 opposition rally at Bolotnaya Ploshchad, where she was detained along with hundreds of others.

The homes of other opposition activists and leaders, including Alexei Navalny, Ilya Yashin

and Ksenia Sobchak, have also been searched by police in connection with the investigation into violence at the May 6 event.

Rybachenko traveled to France last month to take part in a protest against State Duma deputies visiting the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The student activist then met with Russian emigrants and said Monday that she would apply for asylum in Munich, Germany, before her visa expired Wednesday.

She apparently left Germany before her visa expired but told Interfax that she would not reveal her whereabouts, saying, "I am not in Europe but also not in Russia." She could not be reached on her cell phone when called by a Moscow Times reporter Wednesday afternoon.

It was unclear why Rybachenko decided not to apply for refugee status in Germany, but experts said she was extremely unlikely to succeed given the country's tough asylum laws.

"The chances for Russians to be recognized as political refugees are practically zero at present," said Jens Siegert, who heads the Moscow office of the Boell Foundation, a think tank associated with the German Green party.

He said German courts have in recent years consistently denied asylum even to Chechen refugees, who traditionally represent the bulk of Russian applicants. "The argument is that if it is unsafe for them in Chechnya, they can move to another part of Russia," he said.

Other Russia activist Alexander Dolmatov, who was also detained at the May 6 protest on Bolotnaya Ploshchad, is currently in the Netherlands awaiting a decision on an application he submitted for asylum in that country in June.

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