

Pussy Riot Misses Out on German Free Speech Prize

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russian punk band Pussy Riot has missed out on a German freedom of speech prize in honor of Martin Luther, German media said.

The jury for the "Fearless Word" prize overlooked the Russian band, who rose to fame on the back of an anti-Kremlin performance in Moscow's main cathedral, in favor of restaurateurs from the German city of Regensburg, who held a campaign against Nazism, Interfax reported Sunday, citing Deutsche Welle radio.

Pussy Riot's candidacy for the award, which comes with 10,000 euros (\$12,700) in prize money, was proposed by lawmakers from Wittenberg, the city where Luther famously nailed his grievances against the Catholic Church in 1517.

The band's nomination provoked intense discussion among Germans as to whether their so-called "punk prayer" to the Virgin Mary to free Russia of President Vladimir Putin could be

considered a courageous political protest or simply blasphemy.

"In Germany, abusive behavior such as this receives just punishment. And that is what these ladies got in their home country," Christian Democrats lawmaker Frank Scheurel was quoted by Deutsche Welle as saying.

But Hubertus Knabe, head of the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen memorial center, called Pussy Riot's performance an appropriate reflection of Luther's ideology.

"As Martin Luther nailed his theses with criticism of the pope to the church's doors, so Pussy Riot used church to protest against President Vladimir Putin," he said in an interview with the Mitteldeutsche Zeitung daily.

The "Fearless Word" prize is awarded every two years by 16 German cities associated with the life of Martin Luther to individuals and organizations who made a public stance in the spirit of Luther. The award ceremony will be held in April 2013.

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