

Tolokonnikova's Lawyers Appeal to UN Over Prison Conditions

By [The Moscow Times](#)

September 30, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

Nadezhda Tolokonnikova's lawyers sent a letter to the United Nations on Monday, asking for a review of the prison conditions that the incarcerated Pussy Riot activist began protesting against last week with a hunger strike.

The activist's lawyers asked Gulnara Shahinian, the UN special rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, to request information about Tolokonnikova's condition from the Russian government and, if necessary, to recommend that the state stop its system of compulsory labor, Lenta.ru reported.

Her lawyers also appealed to the European Court of Human Rights over the matter, and asked the Investigative Committee to file charges against the prison's administration.

Tolokonnikova was transferred Sunday from solitary confinement to a hospital on the recommendation of her doctor, a representative of the Federal Prison Service told Itar-Tass.

At that time, the representative said her condition was satisfactory, but soon after, both her husband and her lawyers complained of being unable to reach her.

When the activist's husband went to see her in the hospital Monday, he was denied entrance and not even permitted to speak with her by phone, Interfax reported.

"[The head of the hospital] says Nadya's condition is so bad that her legal representatives and spouse cannot be there or communicate with her," Tolokonnikova's husband Pyotr Verzilov said, calling the situation a "blockade."

As of noon Monday, neither he nor her lawyer had received any updates on Tolokonnikova's condition for more than 85 hours, Verzilov said.

Soon after Verzilov's complaints, the Federal Prison Service on Monday released a statement saying Tolokonnikova had been refused visitors because she was receiving medical care and thus could only be seen by doctors.

Tolokonnikova entered her seventh day of the hunger strike Monday.

In the letter in which she announced her hunger strike last Monday, Tolokonnikova repeatedly referred to the camp's work regime as "slave labor," describing 17-hour work days and immense production quotas.

"I will not sit silently, looking without complaint as people in the colony drop in their tracks from these slavery-like conditions," wrote the Pussy Riot member, who was sentenced to a two-year prison term in 2012 for performing an anti-Putin punk song in Christ the Savior Cathedral.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/09/30/tolokonnikovas-lawyers-appeal-to-un-over-prison-conditions-a28143>