

Russia Presses Piracy Charges Against Greenpeace Protesters

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia has pressed piracy charges against all 30 people arrested after the environmental group Greenpeace staged a protest at an offshore oil platform in the Arctic, investigators said Thursday.

The accused could be sentenced to 15 years in prison if convicted over the protest last month, in which a Greenpeace ship approached the Prirazlomnoye platform belonging to state-controlled energy firm Gazprom and two activists tried to scale the rig.

Greenpeace says its protest was peaceful and has dismissed the piracy charges as absurd and unfounded.

The 30, who were aboard the Greenpeace ship Arctic Sunrise during the protest, are being held in custody in the northern Russian city of Murmansk. They include activists and crew members from 18 nations as well as a British videographer and a Russian photographer.

Meanwhile, Gazprom announced that it is on track to begin oil production this year at the oil rig, Russia's first offshore Arctic platform.

"As was envisaged, production is expected to start by the end of the year," Gazprom Neft Shelf, a unit of Gazprom, said.

Russia, which relies on hydrocarbon sales for more than half its budget revenue, believes that Arctic offshore oil and gas development is crucial. The Ministry of Natural Resources puts the offshore oil resources at 100 billion tons, which would be enough to satisfy global demand for 25 years at current consumption levels.

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