

Netherlands Asks Sea Law Tribunal to Release Greenpeace Activists

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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LUXEMBOURG — The Dutch government Monday asked the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to order Russia to release 30 people detained last month during an environmental protest in the Arctic Sea.

The Netherlands hopes for a ruling within a month from the Hamburg-based tribunal that will secure the provisional release of the 28 activists and two freelance journalists who were aboard the Arctic Sunrise when it was detained.

The passengers and crew of the Dutch-registered ship face piracy charges and jail terms of up to 15 years for their protest near a Gazprom oil platform against oil drilling in Arctic waters.

Provisional release would mean the activists could be let out of jail while they await their day in court on the piracy charges. Judges in the far northern port city of Murmansk have so far denied bail to all of them.

The Dutch government, which first asked for arbitration in the case two weeks ago, said it had already nominated its chosen arbiter in the case. It said Russia had until Nov. 3 to choose its arbiter. If Russia had not done so by then, the tribunal's president could choose one instead.

Dutch Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans said there was no question of an escalation of the dispute between the Netherlands and Russia.

"The case will come as no surprise to the Russian Federation," he said at an EU foreign ministers' meeting in Luxembourg.

The Hamburg-based International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea was set up to adjudicate maritime disputes under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which both countries have signed up to. The body has heard 21 cases since its first in 1997.

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