

# European Court Lambasts Russia's Metal Cages

July 17, 2014

**The**  **Moscow Times**

The European Court of Human Rights on Thursday ordered the Russian government to pay two of its citizens compensation for "degrading treatment" by keeping them in metal cages during their court proceedings in an earlier trial.

Keeping defendants in metal cages not only amounts to "inhuman and degrading treatment," but is also "incompatible with the standards of civilized behavior that are the hallmark of a democratic society," the court said in a statement.

The Russian government has thus been ordered to pay 16,000 euros (\$22,000) to the two plaintiffs, Alexander Svinarenko and Valentin Sladnyev, who were earlier convicted in lengthy court hearings on charges of extortion and violence.

While the two men were not involved in any high-profile cases that gained international attention,

Thursday's ruling could prompt others to come forward with complaints. The cages have all

but become a trademark in international coverage of high-profile court cases in Russia, with opposition figures, foreign Greenpeace activists and members of the all-female punk band Pussy Riot all having been photographed in them.

The ruling by the Strasbourg court noted that the practice of placing defendants in metal cages — which was referred to as an "affront to human dignity" — violates the European Convention of Human Rights, of which Russia is a signatory. The court stressed in its statement that while the practice had been abolished in several former Soviet republics, including Georgia and Armenia, Russia had continued.

The court had examined "a number of cases" on the use of metal cages in court rooms, the statement said, and in the majority of cases it found that "such treatment was not justified by security considerations."

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