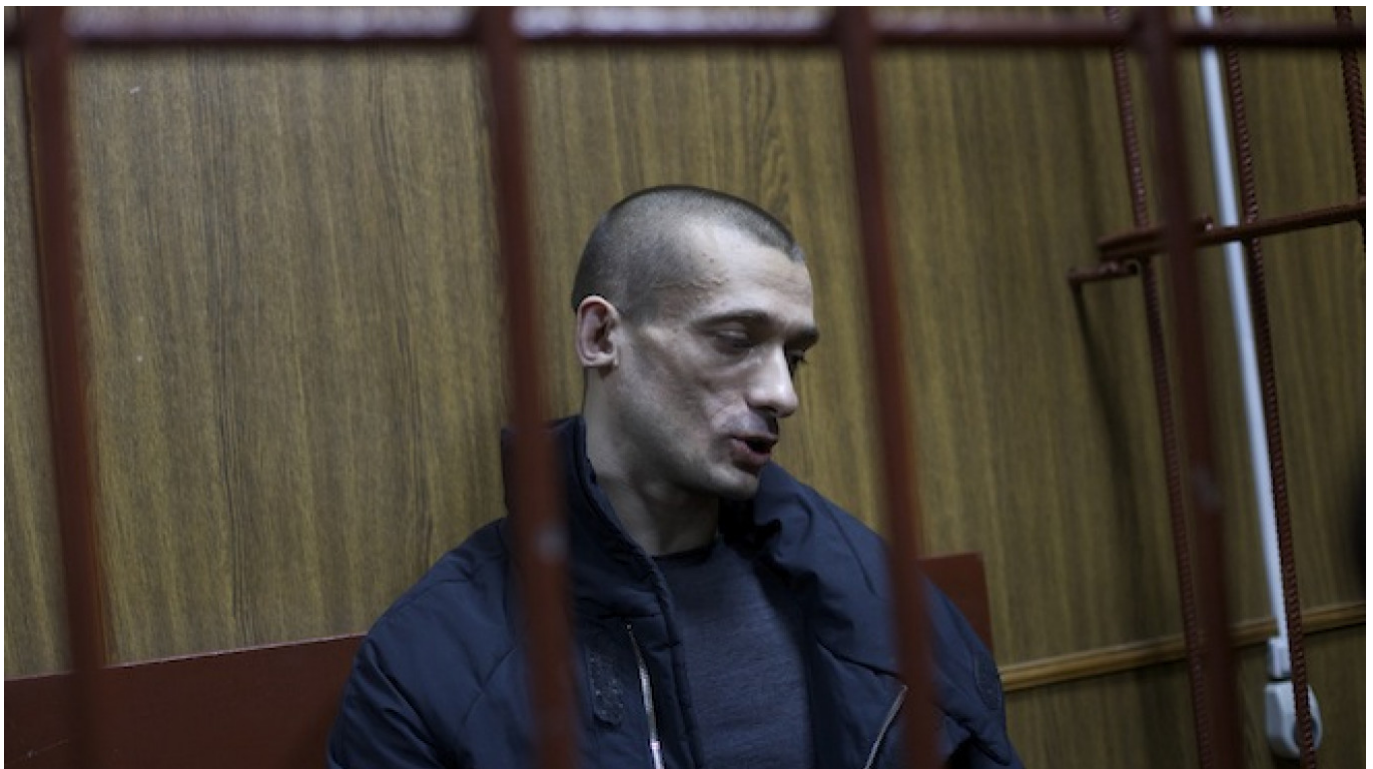


Russian Performance Artist Pavlensky Refuses Permission to Close Case

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Russian artist Pyotr Pavlensky smiles in a cage in court room in Moscow.

Notorious performance artist Pyotr Pavlensky has refused to give his consent for the closure of a criminal case against him, the RBC news agency reported Tuesday.

During his “Freedom” performance, held in February 2014, Pavlensky erected a mini-barricade of car tires and set them ablaze in the center of St. Petersburg. Pavlensky and two other performers waved Ukrainian flags and banged sticks against sheet metal to symbolize the fight of the Ukrainian protesters during Kiev's Maidan rallies.

The criminal case was due to be closed, as too much time has passed, according to the St. Petersburg City Court, but Pavlensky spoke out against it.

"I spoke with my client before the meeting, he was against the closure of the case. We have witnesses, they need to be questioned," said the defendant's lawyer Dmitry Dinze, RBC reported.

In a separate incident, Pavlensky was arrested for vandalism after he set the doors of the FSB's Moscow headquarters on fire in November last year. According to his lawyer, that performance was a reaction to the "urgent problems of Russian society," the Interfax news agency reported.

The artist demanded that he be charged with terrorism.

In February, the court prolonged Pavlensky's custody until April 6. Earlier this month, the artist sent a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) over his detention, claiming that his arrest was excessive, as the performer's actions did not harm anyone, and Pavlensky never tried to hide from the law enforcement officials, RBC reported.

"Pavlensky is not responsible if the police or the FSB disapprove of his artistic work," the appeal read.

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