

Croatia Arrests Pussy Riot Activist Sought by Turkmenistan

By [AFP](#)

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Aysoltan Niyazova. **Olga Borisova / facebook**

Croatian police have arrested a Russian activist linked to protest punk group Pussy Riot, acting on an international warrant issued by Turkmenistan, a member of the group said Wednesday.

Aysoltan Niyazova was arrested on the Croatian border early Monday when she entered the country from Slovenia with the group, Maria Alyokhina told reporters.

Pussy Riot arrived here for a concert in Zagreb as part of its European tour to help Ukraine.

Local media reports say the Turkmen authorities have accused Niyazova of embezzling money from the country's central bank.

But Pussy Riot and Niyazova's lawyer, Lina Budak, say the warrant against her was politically motivated. Local rights activists and Amnesty International have also condemned her

detention.

Niyazova was briefly detained in Slovenia on the same arrest warrant issued by Turkmenistan in 2002.

"I want to raise this case just so everyone knows that an innocent person is in prison now and she should be freed," Alyokhina said.

She was addressing reporters in front of the Zagreb prison where Niyazova is being held.

Niyazova's lawyer Budak would not say on what charge she had been arrested.

But she did say her client had already served a six-year jail term in Russia for the offense cited on the Interpol warrant.

"She cannot be tried again, extradited or serve a new sentence," the lawyer said, adding that they were appealing her detention.

Amnesty International joined calls by local rights activists for Niyazova's release.

Zagreb knows that her "activism would put her at great risk of suffering serious abuse, including torture and other ill-treatment, should she be extradited to Turkmenistan," Julia Hall, Amnesty deputy director for Europe, said in a statement.

"Turkmenistan is not a safe country for her or any human rights defender," she added.

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