

Russian Punk Band Member Taken to Hospital After Hunger Strike

A member of the Russian punk group Pussy Riot who went on hunger strike in jail last week after being barred from a parole hearing was hospitalized on Tuesday, the husband of another band member said.

Maria Alyokhina, 24, and two other band members were sentenced to two years in prison after they broke into Moscow's main cathedral last year to perform a profanity-laced punk song against President Vladimir Putin.

"Today the prison administration decided to put her in the hospital after being on hunger strike for a week," Pyotr Verzilov, husband of imprisoned Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, said from the prison town of Berezniki, more than 1,000 km (620 miles) northeast of Moscow.

He said she was doing well and that she was receiving treatment alone after prison authorities had cleared out an entire wing of the prison hospital.

The prison confirmed she had been taken to hospital, with its press office being quoted by Itar Tass as saying: "Her blood pressure fell and she was given the necessary injections."

Verzilov said she had given up food and only had drunk only water since the day of her parole hearing when she was denied permission to go to the courtroom and was given access only over video link. She was denied parole.

Alyokhina and her two bandmates were convicted of hooliganism motivated by religious hatred last August after a trial seen by Putin's opponents as part of a clampdown on dissent during

a third term in power he began in May 2012.

The third woman jailed, Yekaterina Samutsevich, was freed last October when a judge suspended her sentence on appeal.

Western governments and entertainers including Madonna said the sentence was disproportionate but Putin, a former KGB spy who has cultivated close ties with the Russian Orthodox Church, said the state needed to protect the faithful.

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