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An Open Letter From Pussy Riot

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6 February 2014

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Original Russian on the link.

Anonymous members of Pussy Riot announce a split from their formerly imprisoned colleagues, Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, citing ideological differences and emphasizing their ongoing dedication to radical feminist politics.

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We are anonymous, because we act against any personality cult, against hierarchies implied by appearance, age and other visible social attributes. We cover our heads, because we oppose the very idea of using female face as a trademark for promoting any sort of goods or services.

The mixing of the rebel feminist punk image with the image of institutionalised defenders of prisoners' rights, is harmful for us as collective, as well as it is harmful for the new role that Nadia and Masha have taken on.

Hear them finally!

Since it happened that Nadia and Masha chose not to be with us, please, respect their choice. Remember, we are no longer Nadia and Masha. They are no longer Pussy Riot.

The campaign "Free Pussy Riot" is over. We, as art collective, have an ethical right to preserve our art practice, our name and our visual identity, distinct from other organisations.

Anonymous members of Pussy Riot:
Garadja, Fara, Shaiba, Cat, Seraphima and Schumacher

The following letter by anonymous members of Pussy Riot was circulated this morning, by email and via the collective's livejournal, shortly after recently imprisoned Pussy Riot members Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova performed at an Amnesty International benefit concert at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York. Referring to their two former colleagues, the authors write, "We are no longer Nadia and Masha. They are no longer Pussy Riot." Their letter is presented in full, unedited, below. Pussy Riot will contribute a piece to Creative Time Reports shortly.

Dear friends and our supporters!

In view of the current situation at the moment, we consider it our duty to inform you our position:

We, the anonymous members of Pussy Riot, would like to say many thanks to all the people who have supported us all this time, those who demanded the release of our members, those who sympathized with us and sympathized with our ideology. We are very grateful to all of you, we deeply appreciate and respect everyone who has contributed to the overall Pussy Riot campaign at this difficult for us time.

Our joint efforts were not in vain: Putin had to bend under the pressure of the international community and let Nadia and Masha free.

Thus, December 23rd was a real celebration for us – the Liberation Day of prisoners of conscience and the real victory of the liberation of the entire Pussy Riot.

But the amnesty is certainly not the end of our dreams. We demand real justice: the complete abolition of the verdict and the recognition of the entire criminal case against Pussy Riot, illegitimate.

We do hope that the justice will be restored on February 21 – the anniversary of our teasing performance in the Christ the Savior Cathedral, with the song “Mother of God, put Putin away!”

We are very pleased with Masha’s and Nadia’s release. We are proud of their resistance against harsh trials that fell to their lot, and their determination by all means to continue the struggle that they had started during their stay in the colonies.

Unfortunately for us, they are being so carried away with the problems in Russian prisons, that they completely forgot about the aspirations and ideals of our group – feminism, separatist resistance, fight against authoritarianism and personality cult, all of which, as a matter of fact, was the cause for their unjust punishment.

Now it is no secret that Masha and Nadia are no longer members of the group, and they will no longer take part in radical actionism. Now they are engaged in a new project. Now they are institutionalised advocates of prisoners’ rights.

And as you know, such advocacy is hardly compatible with radical political statements and provocative works of art, that raise controversial topics in modern society. Just as gender-conformity is not compatible with radical feminism.

Institutionalised advocacy can hardly afford the critique of fundamental norms and rules that underline the very mechanics of modern patriarchal society. Being an institutional part of this society, such advocacy, can hardly go beyond the rules set forth by this society.

Yes, we lost two friends, two ideological fellow member, but the world has acquired two brave, interesting, controversial human rights defenders – fighters for the rights of the Russian prisoners.

Unfortunately, we can not congratulate them with this in person, because they refuse to have any contact with us. But we appreciate their choice and sincerely wish them well in their new career.

At the moment, we are witnessing an outrageous collision:

While Nadia Masha are being the focus of media and the international community, they gather crowds of journalists and people heed to their every word, so far no one hears them.

In almost every interview they repeat what they left the group, that they are no longer Pussy Riot, that they act in their own names, that they will no longer engage in radical art activities. However, the headlines are still full of the group’s name, all their public appearances are declared as performances of Pussy Riot, and their personal withdrawal from Pussy Riot is treated as termination of the entire collective, thus ignoring the fact that at the pulpit and solea of Christ the Savior Church, there were not two, but five women in balaclavas and the Red Square performance had eight participants.

The apotheosis of this misunderstanding was the public announcement by Amnesty International of Masha’s and Nadia’s speech at a concert in Barclays Center in New York, as the first legal performance of Pussy Riot.

Moreover, instead of the names of Nadia and Masha, the poster of the event showed a man in a balaclava with electric guitar, under the name of Pussy Riot, while the organizers smartly called for people to buy expensive tickets.

All this is an extreme contradiction to the very principles of Pussy Riot collective:

We are all-female separatist collective – no man can represent us either on a poster or in reality.

We belong to leftist anti-capitalist ideology – we charge no fees for viewing our art-work, all our videos are distributed freely on the web, the spectators to our performances are always spontaneous passers by, and we never sell tickets to our “shows.”

Our performances are always ‘illegal,’ staged only in unpredictable locations and public places not designed for traditional entertainment. The distribution of our clips is always through free and unrestricted media channels.