Greenpeace To Appeal The Jailing Of Activists

MOSCOW (AP) — Environmental group Greenpeace said it will appeal against the rulings of a Russian court that led to the jailing of its activists for a protest near an oil platform in the Arctic. On Thursday, the court in the city of Murmansk jailed 22 members of the Greenpeace team who were protesting near the platform last week. Greenpeace said in a statement Friday that it will appeal and is seeking the crew's immediate release.

Among those jailed are a Russian news photographer and the ship's U.S. captain. Eight more were detained for three days pending a new hearing. No charges have been brought against anyone in the group. The Russian Coast Guard disrupted an attempt by the activists on September 18 to scale the oil platform. Russian authorities seized Greenpeace's ship the next day and towed it with the crew aboard to Murmansk. The detained activists are from 18 countries, including Russia, and a long detention or series of trials could draw unwelcome international attention to Russia's tough policy against protests.

Reporters Without Borders on Thursday protested the jailing of photographer Denis Sinyakov who is a contributor to various international and Russian media outlets, saying his arrest was "an unacceptable violation of freedom of information." The top trans-Atlantic security and rights group, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, also voiced concern and demanded Sinyakov's immediate release. Several Russian media outlets, including the country's private TV station, NTV, took all pictures off their websites in a show of solidarity with the jailed photographer.

The platform, which belongs to an oil subsidiary of the state gas company Gazprom, is the first offshore rig in the Arctic. It was deployed to the vast Prirazlomnoye oil field in the Pechora Sea in 2011, but its launch has been delayed by technological challenges. Gazprom said earlier this month it was to start pumping oil this year, but no precise date has been set.

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