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Shannon Deery

Australian filmmaker Kitty Green arrested by KGB in Belarus



Kitty Green has told friends she is safe. *Source:* Herald Sun

A MELBOURNE woman has been arrested by the KGB during a topless protest against Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko, in Belarus.

Young filmmaker Kitty Green, 27, was feared missing after KGB officers abducted her on Monday at 11am (local time) during a feminist protest on the streets of Minsk.

The group of topless women said three of its members were abducted by security officers, beaten, humiliated and left naked in a forest during the protest.

Ms Green was reportedly held with three other Belarusian female journalists in a KGB office where she was fingerprinted and interrogated until evening.

It was not until the Australian embassy in Moscow intervened that she was released, according to the Femen organisation.

Ms Green had been living in Kiev, Ukraine for the past six months working on a documentary on the Femen organisation.

Femen is widely known in Ukraine and neighbouring countries for its demonstrations in which women bare their breasts to draw attention to an array of causes.

It is understood Ms Green had been in Belarus by herself before the protest.

She has told friends on Facebook she was arrested but is safe after leaving the country via Lithuania.

“She is very relieved she was freed,” Ms Green’s flatmate Alexandra Shevchenko told the Herald Sun this morning from Kiev.

“We were very worried when she was missing but we are very thankful the Australian Embassy in Moscow helped free her.

"Kitty said she was held in the KGB office and they took her fingerprints and made a file on her.

"She told me she will never go to Belarus again."

The three Ukrainian women were later seized by Belarusian KGB agents at the Minsk train station.

They were reportedly blindfolded and taken to a forest where they were forced to strip naked.

The KGB agents then doused them in petrol and threatened to set the women on fire, before using knives to cut off their hair.

The women were then abandoned without their passports, clothes or money in the forest, a Femen spokeswoman said.

They walked to a nearby village to seek help.

"They were able to telephone and told me they were in awful condition, barely alive," the group's leader Anna Gutsol said.

A KGB spokesman refused to comment.

Ms Shevchenko said the Ukrainian Embassy in Belarus would not to help the women escape.

"It's a terrible situation," she said.

"Kitty was lucky and was not hurt like the other girls, but she is from a strong democratic country."

A close friend of Ms Green's, who did not wish to be named, said she was shocked to read about the arrests.

The woman, who met Ms Green while the pair were studying at Melbourne University, said she was worried by the reports but glad to hear her friend was safe.

She said Ms Green had told her friends over Facebook that she was safe and well.

"I was very, very surprised," she said.

The friend said Ms Green had been overseas for about six months, and had not yet revealed plans to return home.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade this morning confirmed that an Australian journalist was detained and subsequently released in Minsk.

"Consular Officials from the Australian Embassy in Moscow provided the journalist with consular assistance. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra provided assistance to the journalist's family in Australia," a DFAT spokeswoman said.