

Former ambassador to Russia demands UK act on Magnitsky death

Britain's former Ambassador to Russia has attacked the Government for failing to crack down on a group of Russian officials allegedly linked to the death of the anti-corruption lawyer Sergei Magnitsky and implicated in a \$230m (£140m) alleged fraud.



Sergei Magnitsky is believed to have uncovered one of the biggest tax frauds in Russian history



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In a letter to *The Daily Telegraph* today, Sir Tony Brenton, Ambassador to Russia from 2004 to 2008, urges the UK authorities to make "publicly clear their abhorrence at what has happened" and to ban those concerned from entry into the UK.

His comments follow a unanimous vote in the Dutch Parliament for the 60 Russian officials identified by UK-based hedge fund Hermitage Capital Management and law firm Jamison Firestone, for which Mr Magnitsky worked, to be barred entry into the country.

The vote, which was passed 150-0 with no abstentions in the Dutch House of Representatives, marks an escalation in the diplomatic war over Mr Magnitsky's death. The European Parliament has already voted through a resolution to allow member countries to introduce a visa ban.

Should the Dutch Government respond to parliamentary pressure by introducing a bill, the Russian officials

would be barred from entering all the major European nations under the Schengen agreement on border controls. The Russian foreign ministry has previously indicated it would retaliate if any EU member state made such a move.

Among the senior officials affected would be Russia's deputy general prosecutor Viktor Grin, deputy interior minister Alexei Anichin, and Viktor Voronin, head of the economic espionage unit at the Federal Security Service (FSB) – the successor to the KGB.

[Hermitage calls for Russian 'fraud' inquiry \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/financial-crime/8587718/Hermitage-Capital-calls-for-Russian-inquiry-into-330m-tax-frauds-uncovered-by-Sergei-Magnitsky.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/financial-crime/8587718/Hermitage-Capital-calls-for-Russian-inquiry-into-330m-tax-frauds-uncovered-by-Sergei-Magnitsky.html)

[Policeman cleared over Magnitsky death \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/financial-crime/8546390/Sergei-Magnitsky-death-Russian-police-officer-cleared-of-wrongdoing.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/financial-crime/8546390/Sergei-Magnitsky-death-Russian-police-officer-cleared-of-wrongdoing.html)

[Police 'fabricated' case against Sergei Magnitsky \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/banksandfinance/8474567/Police-fabricated-case-against-Sergei-Magnitsky.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/banksandfinance/8474567/Police-fabricated-case-against-Sergei-Magnitsky.html)

The US has also introduced a bill to ban entry to the 60 Russian officials in the so-called "Cardin List".

Sir Tony expresses regret that the UK has not taken a leading role in the pursuit of those suspected of being linked to Mr Magnitsky's death. "At the time he pursued the investigations which led to his death, Magnitsky was working for a British company, and had close links with this country," he writes.

"Isn't it time that the British authorities made publicly clear their abhorrence at what has happened, demanded a full investigation, and made it clear too that those concerned will never receive a visa to enter the UK?"

Mr Magnitsky died in jail at the age of 37 after being held for 11 months in a succession of squalid prisons on tax evasion charges while still awaiting trial. He was refused access to his family, denied bail and refused medical help after he developed health problems. His wife and children have since taken refuge in the UK.

A human rights commission appointed by President Dmitry Medvedev earlier this year found Russian police had fabricated the charges against him. The officer who ordered his arrest and detention was one that Mr Magnitsky had testified was central to the \$230m alleged fraud he uncovered – and is one of the 60 on the "Cardin list". The officer has since been promoted.