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Lawyer beaten in Moscow jail just hours before he died

By Shaun Walker, Moscow Correspondent

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An investigation into the death of Sergei Magnitsky in custody has suggested that the 37-year-old lawyer was beaten by eight prison guards with truncheons shortly before he died.

Mr Magnitsky claimed to have uncovered a huge tax fraud involving officials at the Russian Interior Ministry but he was then accused of being involved in the fraud himself. He was arrested in November 2008, and died in a Moscow prison in November 2009.

On Monday, Russia's official Investigative Committee admitted lack of medical treatment was a "direct cause" of Mr Magnitsky's death. But an independent panel of rights experts went further yesterday, reporting to President Dmitry Medvedev that the lawyer was beaten just before he died.

"The case is now taking a whole new direction, which is that Sergei Magnitsky was murdered," said William Browder, head of Hermitage Capital, an investment fund on whose behalf Mr Magnitsky was working. Mr Browder added he wants to see high-level officials brought to justice over the death.

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