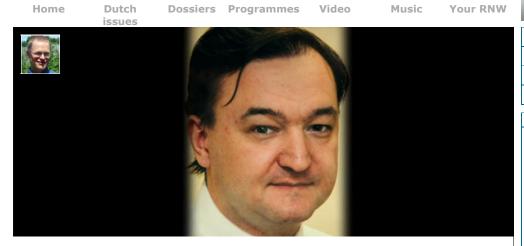
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Dutch MPs want tougher stance against Russia

Published on: 5 October 2011 - 3:16pm | By John Tyler (Photo: UCI Documentaries)

More about: human rights prison conditions Russia Sergei Magnitsky

A majority of Dutch MPs are calling on the government to take measures to punish Russia for alleged human rights abuses in the case of the death in prison in 2009 of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky. The case was highlighted earlier by Radio Netherlands Worldwide and interviews recorded by RNW have been used by UN investigators examining corruption in Russia.

The failure to punish those involved in the lawyer's death, is causing concern among many Dutch MPs who this week again demanded action.

Listen: Investor William Browder tells RNW's Jonathan Groubert how his fund was gutted by Russian officals and how his lawyer Sergei Magnitsky died in jail (13-minute programme fragment)



00:00/00:00

Unanimous support

Coşkun Çörüz handles human rights for the Christian Democrats in the Dutch parliament. He drafted a resolution which got unanimous support this summer calling on the government to take further measures against Russia. Now he wants things to go further:

"The minister said he would take up the matter. But it should not be just words. Here is a case where people went too far, flagrantly, and you have to point that out, and make sure there are consequences such as sanctions."

Dilemma

The case highlights a fundamental dilemma for Dutch foreign policy – when does addressing human rights abuses take precedence over economic interests? Dutch foreign ministers usually try to do both. The current cabinet's foreign policy is decidedly pro-business, however, leading critics to suspect that human rights are no longer a priority.

Foreign Minister Uri Rosenthal has denied this. In the case of Mr Magnitksy, a spokesman for the minister says the Netherlands is applying pressure both in Moscow and in Europe to bring those responsible for the death to justice. And while the minister disagrees with parliament about the need for sanctions, he is considering what other measures could be taken.

No clash

The minister is supported by his party's parliamentary foreign policy spokesman. Free-market conservative Han ten Broeke denies any clash between human rights and economic interests, and says the Netherlands must help ensure that a case like Sergei Magnitsky's never occurs again:

"We won't achieve that in the Netherlands by suddenly going further than we already have. Everyone knows our position. The Russians were furious when our parliament passed the motion. Other European countries are following this lead - this has nothing to do with economic interests."

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Extreme safety measures for South African farmer Three years ago, Joost and Wim van Earlier this year, the United States announced a travel ban for some of those suspected of involvement in Mr Magnitksy's death and there are reports that the UK has taken a similar action, although the government will not confirm this.



William Browder, former manager of Hermitage Fund

US businessman William Browder made a personal appeal to Dutch MPs to pressure the Dutch government to do the same. Sergei Magnitsky was working for Mr Browder's Hermitage Fund when he was arrested in 2009.

Mr Browder is currently travelling around Europe making his case to members of parliament after unsuccessfully lobbying governments themselves. He says European governments are not willing to jeopardise their relations with Russia.

While various critics of the Russian government have been killed over the past few years, the case of Sergei Magnitsky is

exceptional because of his ties to Mr Browder. The American investor had made the Hermitage Fund the largest foreign investment fund in Russia - worth 4.5 billion dollars at its peak.

It was how the Hermitage Fund earned its money that initially won the praise and even the help of Vladimir Putin in his battle with the oligarchs, but later it earned Putin's ire.

"The way we made this money was by exposing corruption inside the companies in Russia we invested in... the way we chose to deal with the corruption was by researching how it was done, and then exposing it in the Financial Times, the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal."

William Browder described the rise and fall of the Hermitage Fund in Russia to Radio Netherlands Worldwide's programme The State We're In last April. That broadcast got the attention of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez, who requested a copy for use in his ongoing work on abuses of power by corrupt authorities in Russia.

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Delay

The Council of Europe this week released a statement asking Russia to prosecute those responsible for Mr Magnitsky's death and to cease intimidation of his family. Russian Prime

Minister Vladimir Putin has now announced another investigation into the death, possibly delaying any Russian action in the matter and bringing into question results of an investigation commissioned by President Dmitri Medvedev, which concluded that the death was indeed suspicious.

Russians were surprised by the Dutch parliamentary resolution passed early this summer. They will have to wait a while longer to see if the resolution has any effect.

(rk/imm)

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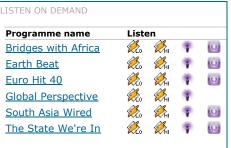
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7 October 2011 - 1:28am / Canada This may not be the ultimate protest but it is nonetheless a voice from a governm	
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source that says this is not the way to conduct buisness as usual.	
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Anonymous	reply
7 October 2011 - 1:07am / timor leste	
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Papuan People Congress 2011 6 October 2011 - 5:04am	reply
Support Papuan People Congress 2011 - http://bit.ly/rhG6Kc	
PeterNY [reply
5 October 2011 - 6:04pm / USA There is no point in accusing Russia of anything. Change in Russia will have to cor	me
from the inside. As long as the Russian people do not decide they want a different	
government it is not the role of other governments to intervene.	
Vera Gottlieb	reply
5 October 2011 - 5:09pm / Germany	
And continue to turn a blind eye to the killings the US is carrying out at will all oven the world?	er
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Hiram1	conly
6 October 2011 - 6:50pm	reply
Does the blind eye also apply to the E.U., Syria, Iran, North Korea, Libya, Chi	na,
and the may other nations who kill at will?	
Hiram1 5 October 2011 - 4:11pm	reply
"A majority of Dutch MPs are calling on the government to take measures to punis	sh
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Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky."Response: What measures will the MPs impos	se
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