

RUSSIA

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Bruno Kreisky Forum for international Dialogue | Armbrustergasse 15 | 1190 Wien

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BILL BROWDER

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GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION AND MURDER IN RUSSIA

What the Sergei Magnitsky Case says about Russia today

Respondent: Ivan Krastev, Center for Liberal Strategies, Sofia, fellow at IWM

Moderation: Tessa Szyszkowitz, journalist

William Browder is the Founder and CEO of Hermitage Capital Management. He is a leading global shareholder rights activist and has been an outspoken fighter for better corporate governance in Russia.

Mr. Browder was the largest foreign investor in Russia until November 2005, when he was suddenly denied entry to the country and declared "a threat to national security" by the Russian government for exposing corruption at large Russian companies.

In 2008 Mr. Browder's lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, uncovered a massive fraud committed by Russian government officials that involved the theft of US\$230 million of state taxes which Hermitage had already paid in 2006. After testifying against the officials involved, Mr. Magnitsky was arrested and imprisoned without trial by those very same government officials. He was tortured in an attempt to force him to retract his testimony and to falsely incriminate himself and his client in the crimes. Despite the physical and psychological pressure, he refused. For almost a year he suffered horrifying detention conditions, and when this led to a drastic deterioration in his health, he was denied any medical attention despite over twenty requests for assistance. He died on 16 November 2009 at the age of 37, leaving a wife and two children.

Since that time, Mr. Browder has been leading a worldwide media, legal and legislative campaign to get justice for Sergei Magnitsky. Actions have included introducing legislation to the US Congress and Canadian Parliament to implement visa bans and freeze the economic assets of those who perpetrated the crimes.

Currently, Mr. Browder is working with the European Parliament, the Council of Europe and several individual EU member states including, Poland, Germany, Sweden, France, Holland, Lithuania, Estonia and the Czech Republic to ensure the implementation of the visa ban and asset freezes across the European Union.