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Justice Minister Says 233 Died in Detention Last Year

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Justice Minister Alexander Konovalov told President Dmitry Medvedev on Wednesday that 233 people died in pretrial detention last year, down from 277 in 2008, Interfax reported.

Konovalov did not give a figure for 2010 but said the number of suspects taken into custody this year was down by almost 20 percent compared with 2009, mainly because of Medvedev's legislation banning pretrial detention for people linked to economic crimes.

Medvedev ordered the Justice Ministry on Wednesday to draft new legislation that would allow more people suspected of minor crimes to be spared arrests.

Shortcomings of the pretrial detention system came into the spotlight after Hermitage Capital lawyer Sergei Magnitsky died in custody in Moscow in November, apparently from a lack of medical care.

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