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Jailed Mother Walks Free Until 2022

By Alexandra Odynova

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Yulia Kruglova, a pregnant mother of four young children, was released Friday after the Samara Regional Court postponed her prison sentence on embezzlement charges until 2022 — when her youngest daughter will turn 14.

Kruglova, 36, who is due to have a Caesarean section to deliver her fifth child Sept. 20, burst into tears on the doorsteps of the prison hospital where she had been jailed, thanking her supporters and promising to fight to clear her name, Interfax reported.

Kruglova was sentenced in July to three years in prison on charges of embezzling 16 million rubles ($522,000) from the Tolyatti branch of insurer Oranta, now owned by a Dutch-based company. She pleaded not guilty.

The ruling ignored a legal provision that allows the postponement of prison sentences for parents of underage children.

Kruglova's jailing sparked a public outcry and a campaign to free her, spearheaded by former

Yukos lawyer and mother of three Svetlana Bakhmina, who herself was denied leniency in a similar situation during a politically tainted trial in 2006.

Kruglova was also backed by children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov and the Public Chamber. Even the prosecution appealed the July ruling, asking for leniency.

Astakhov praised Friday's decision to postpone the sentence and said 467 women were granted leniency in similar situations last year, Interfax reported.

The leniency provision triggered a heated debate in August after it was applied to the daughter of an Irkutsk official who had her sentence for killing a pedestrian and seriously injuring another in a road accident postponed by 14 years.

Bakhmina said she was glad that Kruglova's fifth child would not be born in prison. “Yulia still has a struggle for acquittal ahead of her. The court decided that acquitting her would be too good," she wrote Friday on her LiveJournal blog. "But for those who understand, the main thing is that the child will be born free, and the older kids will see their mother in an hour."

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