

Prosecutors Seek Life for Ex-Senator

November 30, 2010

The  Moscow Times

Prosecutors asked on Tuesday to sentence former Federation Council Senator Igor Izmestyev to life in prison on terrorism charges in a trial that was slammed as rigged by leading rights activists, Interfax reported.

Izmestyev and 12 co-defendants are accused of forming a criminal group in 1992 that killed a dozen people and committed various other crimes, including bribery and terrorism.

Prison terms of up to 24 years were requested for the other defendants in the closed trial, Interfax reported, citing an unidentified participant in the hearing. It remained unclear when the case would resume at the Moscow City Court.

Izmestyev is also accused of underpaying more than 3 billion rubles (\$95 million) in taxes at his Ufanekhtekhim oil company. Nothing has been said about the case, which was reviewed by Moscow's Basmanny District Court, since December 2009. Repeated calls to the court's press office went unanswered Tuesday.

The senator, who represented Bashkortostan, has denied any wrongdoing and linked the charges to his refusal to sell a mansion near Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's residence in the

Moscow region.

A group of human rights leaders, including Lyudmila Alexeyeva and Lev Ponomaryov, published a letter Thursday to President Dmitry Medvedev saying Izmestyev was innocent, but that he was denied the "right to a fair trial." The Kremlin has not reacted to the letter.

Izmestyev was in the Federation Council from 2001 to 2006. He moved to Switzerland after that but was detained during a trip to Kazakhstan and extradited to Russia in 2007.

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