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Dutch Lawmakers Vote for Sanctions in Magnitsky Case

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The Netherlands has joined the fray over the death of Hermitage Capital lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, with the country's legislature voting to support an entry ban and freeze on assets of Russian officials implicated in the case.

The vote, which passed 150-0, does not introduce the ban or freeze but calls on the Dutch government to support a push for such sanctions, which are being considered separately by U.S. and EU authorities, Hermitage said in a statement Monday.

It was not immediately clear whether any of the Russian officials affected by the ban had assets in the Netherlands. Hermitage did not name the blacklisted officials or say how many there were.

The Dutch government has not commented on the issue. If it moves to impose the ban, the officials essentially could be banned from all member states of the European Union, rights

champion Svetlana Gannushkina said, Interfax reported.

A Foreign Ministry source called the Dutch initiative “unacceptable,” Radio Liberty reported.

In May, U.S. Senator Ben Cardin introduced a bill into Congress proposing visa sanctions and the freezing of U.S. assets of 60 Russian officials implicated in Magnitsky’s death. The European Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee unanimously approved a similar sanctions proposal in November. But neither legislature has voted on the bills so far.

Magnitsky was arrested on tax charges in 2008 after he accused senior Interior Ministry officials of embezzling $230 million of state money through tax refunds. He died of health problems in pretrial detention in November 2009.

Magnitsky’s supporters call the case against him fabricated and say he was intentionally denied medical help. The Investigative Committee confirmed Monday that he died because of lack of treatment and said the officials who were responsible have been identified and would be punished. It named no names.

Meanwhile, the Moscow City Court upheld on Monday the arrest in absentia of Ivan Cherkasov, a longtime partner at London-based Hermitage, who is charged with tax fraud worth 2 billion rubles ($73 million) in connection with a related case, Interfax reported.

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