

Former Yukos CEO Khodorkovsky Lands Magazine Job

By [Jonathan Earle](#)

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The  Moscow Times

Mikhail Khodorkovsky has a new job — as a magazine columnist.

The jailed former Yukos CEO on Monday published his first regular column in the opposition New Times weekly describing his experience in prison.

The [column](#) features the ghastly story of two fellow inmates he says suffered gross mistreatment at the hands of the criminal justice system.

Kolya, 23, whom Khodorkovsky describes as a lifelong outcast, gashed his own stomach to avoid being charged with robbing an elderly woman, a crime he did not commit.

Police asked him to plead guilty to the robbery to close the case, but Kolya refused, saying he would lose all self-respect over it, and pelted prison officials with his own innards when they pressured him, barely surviving the hara-kiri.

"I look at this man, a repeat offender, and think about all the people living in freedom who place a lower price on their honor, who don't think it's all that bad to swipe a couple thousand rubles from an elderly man or woman," Khodorkovsky writes.

Sergei, 30, an addict sobering up in Khodorkovsky's cell after a drug binge, faced a lengthy prison term because investigators framed him for dealing drugs after he refused to identify his actual dealer.

But Sergei was saved by a near-miracle after the man who framed him came forward in court and, citing a terminal illness, confessed his crime and exposed police officers who provided protection to his business.

"The system is such. The people are such. Before the threshold. At the threshold. It awaits us all," Khodorkovsky concludes.

It was not immediately clear whether Khodorkovsky, once Russia's richest man, was being paid to write the column.

New Times editor-in-chief Ilya Barabanov said the column would appear as often as possible.

"Mikhail Borisovich will be telling the stories of the people he's met during his time behind bars," Barabanov [said](#) on Finam FM radio. "I think he will also share his views on the social and political state of our country. ... He will do as he wishes."

Officials have not commented on the project.

Khodorkovsky, in jail since 2005 for fraud and tax evasion, had his sentence extended to 2016 following a related trial on embezzling oil. His defenders say both cases were politically motivated.

He is serving his sentence at a prison in the Karelia republic near the Finnish border. A request for parole is pending court review, though his chances of walking out early appear low after a similar request by his former business partner Platon Lebedev, jailed on the same charges, was thrown out in July over technicalities.

Opposition-minded Novaya Gazeta told the court that it would offer Lebedev a job as a columnist if he were released, but the court sided with prosecutors' complaints that Lebedev had violated prison rules by losing his prison-issued pants and slippers.

Khodorkovsky has published numerous articles and interviews in Russian and foreign media during his time in prison.

In 2009, he contributed a piece titled "In Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Trust" to The Moscow Times, arguing against the thesis that Russians are "genetically unfit for freedom" and urging Medvedev to prove his point by cleaning up the country's judiciary.

Famous writers Boris Akunin and Lyudmila Ulitskaya have also published prison letter exchanges with Khodorkovsky. Most of Khodorkovsky's publications, however, have been political and sociological ruminations, not human interest stories.

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