

Ex-Yukos CEO 'Illegally Shared' Cigarettes

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Mikhail Khodorkovsky's chances for parole have all but crumbled after prison officials delivered two reprimands over petty alleged violations within a month, his legal team said Wednesday.

One official reprimand was given earlier this month after the former Yukos CEO treated a fellow inmate in the Karelian prison where he is incarcerated to cigarettes — which was classified as "illegal sharing," his lawyers said in an e-mailed statement.

The other reprimand is for "being in an off-limits zone without authorization," it said, adding that it was in connection with an incident involving Khodorkovsky waiting for a work assignment in the office of his absent supervisor. It said the reprimand was unfair because Khodorkovsky did not leave the area where inmates are supposed to stay.

Although the alleged offenses are minor, they give a valid pretext to deny Khodorkovsky parole, the statement said, adding that both reprimands would be appealed.

Khodorkovsky is serving a 13-year sentence on fraud, tax evasion and other charges that his supporters call punishment from Vladimir Putin's Kremlin.

Khodorkovsky's lawyers have unsuccessfully petitioned for his early release for several months. The parole request, which has stalled in court, now will have to take the reprimands into account.

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