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Browder Lobbies EU for Magnitsky Bans

By The Moscow Times

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Hermitage Capital founder Bill Browder is lobbying 10 European countries after Britain reportedly followed a U.S. ban on Russian officials over the death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky.

"I am confident that these 10 countries will do what's required in the end," Browder said by telephone from The Hague, where he met Monday with government officials.

The 10 European Union countries include Germany, France, Poland, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic.

Browder, whose London-based fund employed Magnitsky and was once the largest foreign portfolio investor in Russia, said he believes Britain has barred 60 Russian officials linked to Magnitsky's death in a Moscow prison in 2009.

Britain's Observer reported Sunday that London had secretly imposed the visa ban. But Interfax, citing a British Embassy spokesman in Moscow, reported Monday that no ban had been implemented.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Boldyrev said the authorities were seeking clarification from Britain.

Browder accuses the Russian authorities of a whitewash over Magnitsky's death. President Barack Obama's administration in July implemented a visa ban on a number of Russian officials after U.S. senators proposed legislation to punish Russian human rights abusers.

Visa bans are the best way to put pressure on officials guilty of human rights abuses, said Boris Nemtsov, one of the leaders of the opposition Parnas party. "It's a frightening punishment for corrupt bureaucrats who send their children to study abroad and have property and bank accounts there," he said by phone.

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