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Litvinenko Widow Launches Appeal for U.K. Inquest Cash

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LONDON — The wife of Alexander Litvinenko, the former Russian agent turned Kremlin critic who was murdered in London five years ago, has launched an appeal for help in funding her legal fees at an inquiry into his death.

Last week, a London coroner indicated that he backed calls for a full inquest into the death of Litvinenko, who died from poisoning by radioactive polonium that was slipped to him in a cup of tea at a plush hotel in November 2006.

The coroner also said there should be further investigations into Litvinenko's death, in which his wife, Marina, argues that the Russian state was fully complicit.

The Russian dissident's killing plunged relations between Britain and Russia to a post-Cold War low, with Britain still unhappy that Moscow has refused its request to extradite the main murder suspect Andrei Lugovoi, a former KGB bodyguard.

Russia has said it would investigate the matter through a Russian court but says Britain has

failed to cooperate.

Launching an appeal for funds, Marina Litvinenko said her legal costs for the inquest could run into more than £1 million ($1.58 million) and that would leave her "severely constrained."

"I am prepared to do whatever it takes to find the truth about the unprecedented act of nuclear terrorism that killed Sasha [Alexander] Litvinenko and endangered the lives of thousands of my fellow Londoners," she said in a statement.

"In these proceedings the evidence collected by the Metropolitan Police will be weighed against the story presented by Sasha's accused murderer and his sponsors, with the unlimited resources of the Russian state at their disposal."

British prosecutors are currently considering fresh evidence from police about the case and expect to complete their review at the end of October.

A decision on the scope of the inquest will follow that review.

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