

Court Orders Release Of Ill Businesswoman

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

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A gravely ill businesswoman held in pretrial detention in Moscow may be released within days after the city court ruled on Wednesday that her arrest had been extended illegally.

Although the decision is in line with Kremlin-backed laws easing the terms for the release of ill suspects accused of economic crimes, it came after months of legal squabbles.

The Moscow City Court on Wednesday ordered the Tverskoi District Court to revise its Oct. 4 decision to keep Natalya Gulevich in detention until Nov. 7, her lawyer told The Moscow Times.

The district court has until Monday to rule again on whether to extent Gulevich's detention, lawyer Andrei Shtanko said by telephone.

She has been awaiting trial on fraud charges in a prison hospital since December, Shtanko

said. She has lost 17 kilograms and needs treatment in a specialized clinic, he said.

Gulevich suffered several chronic illnesses at the time of her arrest, but that did not stop the district court from extending her detention at least five times — with the city court upholding the previous rulings.

Twice, Gulevich's detention was extended by the same judge who prolonged the jail stay of Hermitage Capital lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who died in pretrial detention in 2009 of health problems.

The city court did not explain what prompted the sudden change of heart, but on Oct. 7 the European Court of Human Rights accepted an emergency appeal over Gulevich's detention, Shtanko said. No date is set for a hearing.

City police opened a criminal case against Gulevich in 2010 over her failure to pay back a loan of 529 million rubles (\$17 million) to Nomos Bank.

Shtanko said she fell victim to a property dispute because the bank "seized" several office buildings belonging to her group of companies, Status, in 2009 and fired her.

"She was unable to do anything about the loan even if she had wanted to because she no longer headed her company," the lawyer said. "A battle for property is under way, and the criminal case is a tool in this battle."

An e-mail and repeated calls to Nomos Bank press office, as well as an e-mail to the city police press office, went unanswered Wednesday.

The government in January eased rules for releasing ill suspects, and President Dmitry Medvedev in March signed a law eliminating prison terms as mandatory punishment for a range of economic crimes. However, courts have remained reluctant to implement the softened rules.

Meanwhile, at least three other gravely ill suspects remain in pretrial detention in Moscow.

Stanislav Kankia is being held on fraud charges despite surviving several cerebral hemorrhages in detention, leading to brain damage, while paralyzed former notary Vladimir Orlov is being held on charges of attempted murder, The New Times [reported](#) Monday. The third suspect, Georgy Mekvevrishvili, accused of theft, has serious bowel problems and a festering stomach wound, prisoner rights activist Nadezhda Radnayaeva [said](#) by telephone.

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