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Khodorkovsky's Ex-Cellmate Seeks British Asylum

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Jailed billionaire Mikhail Khodorkovsky's former cellmate is seeking political asylum in Britain after saying prison officials forced him to attack the tycoon and accuse him of sexual harassment.

Alexander Kuchma, who served part of a seven-year sentence for armed robbery in a Siberian prison with Khodorkovsky, told news site Gazeta.ru that he had written to the British ambassador.

"I ask that you grant me political asylum in Britain on the grounds that my life and freedom are in danger," the site cited Kuchma's appeal as saying.

British Embassy officials did not return a call for comment.

Kuchma, who was released in February, said guards tortured him and forced him to assault Khodorkovsky in 2006. He also said he was made to file a 2009 lawsuit claiming that the former Yukos chief made homosexual advances while they shared a cell.

Khodorkovsky, once Russia's wealthiest man, was sentenced in 2003 to eight years in prison for tax evasion and fraud. His sentence was extended last December until 2016 in what was widely viewed as political persecution.

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