

Kremlin Adviser: Pardon Khodorkovsky

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NOVOKUIBYSHEVSK, Samara Region — President Dmitry Medvedev's human rights council urged him to pardon Mikhail Khodorkovsky in his last weeks in office, presenting legal advice that this doesn't need an admission of guilt from the former Yukos CEO.

The recommendation will be discussed at the council's meeting with Medvedev next month, the body's head, Mikhail Fedotov, said late last week in an interview in Novokuibyshevsk. Prime Minister and President-elect Vladimir Putin will take over as head of state on May 7.

"The president has the right to pardon whomever he wants," Fedotov said.

Khodorkovsky's lawyer, Yury Schmidt, said he wasn't optimistic that his client would be freed and that Putin had the final say.

Medvedev earlier this month ordered a review of the guilty verdicts against Khodorkovsky. Prosecutor General Yury Chaika has until April 1 to review the case, the Kremlin press service said.

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