

Investor Rights Commissioner Says Only 19,000 Entrepreneurs in Jail

By [The Moscow Times](#)

November 07, 2012

The  Moscow Times

The Kremlin's commissioner on investor rights said Wednesday that far fewer private entrepreneurs are in prison after falling victim to government-authorized corruption than has been portrayed in the West, but he conceded that even one unjustly jailed person was enough to damage the investment climate.

Boris Titov, appointed by President Vladimir Putin in June, told a business forum in Tomsk that the number of jailed entrepreneurs "is not gigantic."

"Just over 13,000 people are imprisoned on economic charges, with up to 6,000 more in pretrial detention," he said, Interfax reported.

The problem of entrepreneurs being detained on dubious charges linked to state-sanctioned corruption has been called one of the biggest threats to the development of small and mid-sized businesses.

In September 2011, on the eve of a visit to Moscow by British Prime Minister David Cameron, four former British foreign secretaries wrote an open letter saying “hundreds of thousands” of businesspeople have been jailed. The letter urged him to press Russia on protection of businesses against corruption.

Titov said that even a single unjustified prosecution was too much because it could damage the business climate. He said fraud constitutes the most common accusation against entrepreneurs because its legal definition allows a broad and arbitrary application.

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