

Judge Rules Freeze on Some Berezovsky Assets

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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LONDON — The ex-partner of exiled Russian billionaire Boris Berezovsky is pursuing him in a British court for a share of his assets, adding to financial pressures on him months after he lost a \$6 billion dispute with rival Roman Abramovich.

A High Court judgment last week modified an earlier ruling granting Yelena Gorbunova's request that up to 200 million pounds (\$317 million) of Berezovsky's assets be frozen. The court said only those assets at risk could be restricted.

Berezovsky was saddled with over \$100 million in legal costs when his protracted battle against Abramovich, the owner of the Chelsea football club, ended in defeat in August.

The billionaire had tried to keep the proceedings between him and Gorbunova confidential, but the latest judgment on the asset freeze was published on an online database after complaints from journalists.

"On the evidence, Mr. Berezovsky is a man under financial pressure. It is likely that he will feel a more pressing need to satisfy creditors than satisfy Ms. Gorbunova," judge George Mann wrote in his judgment.

Berezovsky, who lives in self-imposed exile in London, did not respond to a request for a comment.

In her application for the asset-freeze order, Gorbunova said Berezovsky had promised that when he sold his 25 million pound Wentworth Park country estate, she would receive 5 million pounds from the proceeds.

Instead, when the estate near London was sold last year, the money went to his creditors, and she saw none of it.

She also said Berezovsky had told her she was the owner of two French properties he is selling, and she expressed concern that she will not receive anything from those sales because he needs the money for himself.

Berezovsky's lawyers argued that Gorbunova's application for the asset freeze had not followed the correct procedures and that the scale of the freeze was excessive.

Mann's judgment that only the assets at risk, namely the French properties, should be frozen means Berezovsky can't sell them and dispose of the proceeds until his dispute with Gorbunova is resolved.

Regarding the Wentworth Park sale, Mann wrote that if Gorbunova was right and "the 5-million-pound bird has already flown," then there were no funds on which any injunction could bite.

Noting that the French properties were held through "obscure offshore structures," he said there was a risk Berezovsky could manipulate matters to deprive Gorbunova of what she said she was entitled to.

The judge also made reference to Berezovsky's "propensity to go so far as giving dishonest evidence in pursuit of a claim against another in the Abramovich proceedings."

This was a reference to judge Elizabeth Gloster's ruling last year in the Berezovsky-Abramovich case, when she said Berezovsky was an "unimpressive and inherently unreliable witness".

"It is to be anticipated that Mr. Berezovsky will vigorously contest the claim, dispute a lot of the evidence and advance evidence of his own," the judge wrote.

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