

Medvedev Plays Down Magnitsky Concerns

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Medvedev taking a walk during an interview in Davos after the forum. **Dmitry Astakhov**

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev used a prime-time TV interview Saturday to dismiss concerns that growing fallout from the 2009 death of anti-corruption lawyer Sergei Magnitsky would damage Russia's business interests.

Medvedev said the whistle-blower's death in jail, for which no one has been brought to justice, was being used by Kremlin critics to score points but was of no importance to business leaders.

The assurances seemed to contradict concerns aired by members of Russia's business elite last week on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where Medvedev was Moscow's top representative.

"It does not interest anyone, except maybe certain citizens who are trying to use it to

accumulate political capital,” said Medvedev, who was president from 2008 until Vladimir Putin returned to the Kremlin in May.

“Not a single businessman raises this issue,” he told state television in an interview focusing on his role in the forum. “But unfortunately it has become a factor in political life.”

Magnitsky was 37 when he died after nearly a year in pretrial detention on tax evasion charges. He said he was denied proper medical care, and members of Medvedev’s own human rights council said he was probably beaten to death.

Authorities said he died of a heart attack, but his former employer, investment fund Hermitage Capital, says he was killed because he was investigating a \$230 million theft by mid-ranking Interior Ministry and tax officials through fraudulent tax refunds.

Magnitsky’s death caused an outcry and underscored the risks faced by Russians who challenge the state.

In what Kremlin critics called a travesty of justice, Russia is trying him posthumously, and preliminary hearings start Monday.

Medvedev brushed off a question about the potential effects on investment in Russia, saying the issue had been politicized and had little relation to the economy.

At Davos, Medvedev said, “there was no business discussion [of the Magnitsky issue].”

For foreign executives, however, it is symbolic of broader concerns about operating in Russia, where perceived corruption and weak corporate governance add to the risks of investment.

Investigations with ties to the Magnitsky case have taken place in three European countries that are important conduits for fund transfers by Russian business.

Magnitsky’s mother thanked President Barack Obama on Friday for signing a U.S. law targeting Russian officials deemed to be human rights violators involved in her son’s death, the Associated Press reported.

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