

Court Sanctions Arrest in Absentia of Fugitive Businessman Polonsky

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Polonsky at a press conference in 2012. **M. Stulov**

Moscow's Tverskoi District Court on Tuesday sanctioned the arrest in absentia of former real estate tycoon Sergei Polonsky on charges of large-scale fraud.

The judge granted a request from Russia's Interior Ministry to arrest the businessman — who is currently in Israel — because he refuses to appear before investigators. He is now on an international wanted list, Interfax reported.

Polonsky is suspected of stealing more than 5.7 billion rubles (\$172 million) from stakeholders in a residential development project between 2007 and 2008.

Polonsky's companies sold apartments in the Kutuzovskaya Mile project in western Moscow. A subsidiary of his construction firm Potok, formerly Mirax Group, then drew up sales agreements that had no relation to the actual project before collecting the money and going

artificially bankrupt, investigators said.

Law enforcement agencies in other countries are also looking into Polonsky's activities.

"We received a letter from Interpol — an investigation against Polonsky is being conducted in Switzerland on charges of money laundering," investigators said.

Polonsky's defense lawyer Diana Tatosova had asked the court to adjourn the session again, as her client had to go to the Israeli Interior Ministry on Tuesday for an interview as part of his application for Israeli citizenship. The court refused, however.

Polonsky's Israeli visa expires on Sept. 27, Israeli authorities said.

Israel's Interior Ministry said it would start the process of extraditing Polonsky to Russia if the court files a request.

Polonsky was infamously punched by businessman Alexander Lebedev during a television talk show in 2011.

Lebedev, who finances anti-Kremlin newspaper Novaya Gazeta, was found guilty of assault and sentenced to 150 hours of community service in July.

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