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Human Rights Council Calls for Broader Economic Amnesty

By The Moscow Times

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Mikhail Fedotov, head of the Presidential Council for Human Rights, has proposed introducing a broader amnesty for economic crimes in addition to the one that began in July, Kommersant reported Wednesday.

He said the amnesty should be prepared for the 20th anniversary of the Russian Constitution in December.

Fedotov said the first amnesty, which was intended to spur economic growth by releasing entrepreneurs, had not been successful.

That amnesty only remains in effect for six months and was meant to result in the release of more than 1,000 individuals found guilty of economic crimes, including running illegal businesses, violating patent rights and evading taxes. But less than 200 have been amnestied so far, according to Fedotov.

Assistant business ombudsman Oleg Denisenko, who is in charge of the economic crimes amnesty, told Kommersant that the ombudsman's office in Moscow was overwhelmed with letters asking for clarification on the terms and conditions of the amnesty and with complaints from those whose amnesty requests were refused. Denisenko, however, places the total number of those amnestied so far at 336.

The Council on Human Rights has called a meeting for Sept. 4 to propose the expanded amnesty to President Vladimir Putin.

The amnesty for financial crimes applies to only 27 articles of the Criminal Code and only to first time offenders.

Denisenko previously told Kommersant that some jailed entrepreneurs whose prison term would come soon to an end would likely refuse the amnesty in order not to pay the damages connected with their convictions, a requirement for those who seek to be released.

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