Putin Weighs In Arrest of Uralkali CEO

By [The Moscow Times](#)

September 08, 2013

ST. PETERSBURG — President Vladimir Putin said Friday that it was necessary to resolve a potash dispute with Belarus, which led to the arrest of the boss of producer Uralkali, but said it was important to avoid escalating the problem.

These were Putin's first comments since potash group Uralkali pulled out of an export venture with Belarus. This prompted Belarus to arrest Uralkali's head Vladislav Baumgertner. Minsk has kept Baumgertner in jail for nearly two weeks.

Putin has not yet discussed the matter with Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko, Putin told journalists after a Group of 20 Summit in St. Petersburg.

"This is because we want to resolve the problem and not to drive it into a dead end, which would be very easily done if we kicked up a fuss," Putin said in response to a question. "This problem needs to be resolved."

Putin's spokesman said earlier Friday that Russia needed to study all Belarussian claims

against Uralkali before coming to any conclusions.

The Kremlin's comments on the issue have been much less emphatic than statements by deputies of Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, suggesting a split between the Kremlin and Medvedev's government in their commitment to support Uralkali.

First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov and Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich have called the detention of Baumgertner, CEO of the world's top potash producer, "inappropriate" and "not acceptable."

A district court in Minsk decided to leave Baumgertner in detention Friday, resisting pressure from Russia to release him after his arrest last month after the breakup of a local joint venture.

"Our complaint was not satisfied by the court. We will appeal the decision in the Minsk City Court," his lawyer Dmitry Goryachko told reporters in Minsk.