

Ex-Wife of Russia's Richest Man Potanin Sues for Half His Fortune

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Vladimir Potanin

The jilted ex-wife of Russia's richest man, Vladimir Potanin, is suing for half of his business empire, which includes mining giant Norilsk Nickel and conglomerate Interros, a news report said Wednesday.

But instead of planning to manage the shares in the mining company herself, Natalya Potanina wants to hand control of them over to the government.

"So that our conflict does not impact Norilsk Nickel, which is a strategic enterprise and one of Russia's largest taxpayers and employers, I intend on placing the shares in [Norilsk Nickel] that are owed to me under the government's control," Potanina said in a statement, the TASS news agency reported.

Vladimir Potanin, aged 54, had a fortune of \$14.8 billion as of Wednesday, making him —

for the moment — Russia's richest man, according to the Forbes news agency.

The Potanins divorced last year after 30 years of marriage. While Potanin claimed at the time that the two had not lived together since 2007, his former wife offered a very different version of events.

The divorce was "completely" unexpected for her, Potanina told GQ magazine in an interview, adding that her ex-husband proposed giving her "practically nothing" in the settlement.

And this she found unacceptable. "I believe that all property amassed in 30 years of marriage, including that which has been hidden in offshores, is family property," Potanina said in the statement cited by TASS.

Now she is playing hardball. Potanina has filed a case in Moscow's Presnensky District Court citing article 34 of Russia's Family Code, which requires that all property accrued by two spouses during their marriage be divided equally in the event of their divorce, the RBC news agency reported, citing Potanina's statement.

Potanin in an interview televised on Rossia-24 late last year admitted to touring the Hermitage museum in St. Petersburg with "my wife" — in essence admitting to a second marriage. This remarriage has never officially been confirmed.

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