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Khodorkovsky Calls for Regime Change, New Constitution

By The Moscow Times

December 16, 2015



Mikhail Khodorkovsky

Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the former Yukos CEO and Vladimir Putin's bete noire, who now leads the pro-democracy Open Russia initiative, has published an article on the organization's official website in which he calls for a redrafting of the Russian constitution - arguing that the authorities' disregard for its provisions has plunged the country into a "constitutional crisis."

"Today, the constitution is just a piece of paper — a supposed symbol of federal values, freedom and democracy. In practice, Vladimir Putin and his circle use and abuse it as they see fit," he wrote, quoting as examples the extension of the presidential term from four to six years in 2008 and the abolition of direct gubernatorial elections in 2004.

He went on to argue that the constitution needed to be amended "immediately" to explicitly mention the Russian people's "right to rebel against usurpers."

It should then be replaced with a completely new draft once Russia has seen the introduction of parliamentary democracy, with the cabinet chosen by lawmakers, and decentralization (with regional authorities managing their own budgets), the article said.

The Open Russia initiative was working on both amendment proposals and a draft of a new constitution, the Meduza.io news site reported Wednesday.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/12/16/khodorkovsky-calls-for-regime-change-new-constitution-a51253