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Serebrennikov Fraud Case Won't Harm Russia's Reputation, Says Culture Minister

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Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky **Kremlin Press Service**

Russia's Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky doesn't think a high-profile corruption case against prominent director Kirill Serebrennikov, who on Wednesday was placed under house arrest, will harm Russia's image.

"I wouldn't exaggerate the international significance of this situation," Medinsky was cited as saying by BBC Russia. "Such situations are sad, but they happen all around the world."

Serebrennikov was detained by law enforcement on Tuesday and charged with embezzling 68 million rubles ($1.1 million) in government funds as part of the "Platforma" project connected to Moscow's Gogol Center. He faces up to ten years in behind bars.

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The director’s arrest met with sharp criticism from many within Russia’s cultural elite who say the case against Serebrennikov is politically motivated, a claim the country’s top cultural official denies.

“This is regrettable,” Medinsky said. “But there is no [question] of it being politically or economically motivated,” adding he had been told by “sources."

Some ministry employees have been called for questioning by investigators, but not the minister himself, Medinsky said.

“We on our side can only do one thing: increase control of applications for government grants,” he was cited as saying. “But on the other hand, we’re not the Investigative Committee. We can’t investigate every single signature."

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