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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Says 'It's Tough' to Live Below Minimum Wage in Response to Disgruntled Woman

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In a video shared on social media, a member of the public can be seen confronting Putin at a memorial marking the 20th anniversary of the death of his former boss and St. Petersburg Mayor Anatoly Sobchak. **Alexei Druzhinin/TASS**

President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday he believes "it's tough" to live on a minimum wage in Russia.

In a video shared on social media, a member of the public can be seen confronting Putin at a memorial marking the 20th anniversary of the death of his former boss and St. Petersburg Mayor Anatoly Sobchak.

"I think it's very tough," Putin said in barely audible comments when the woman asks him if 10,800 rubles ($170) per month is a livable wage.

The president appeared to go on the defensive when the woman pressed on and suggested

that he earns more than the minimum wage.

“Not just me,” Putin said. “There are way higher salaries.”

“The president doesn’t have the highest salary,” he said.

Observers on social media quickly drew comparisons to former Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev’s infamous “There’s no money, but you hang in there” refrain to disgruntled pensioners in 2016.

Months before his sudden resignation, Medvedev again made headlines when a Siberian pensioner dropped to her knees and asked him to make the authorities install hot water in her apartment building.

While real disposable incomes in Russia began to rise earlier this year following six years of slow decline, economists say that Russians’ spending power is still well below pre-2014 levels. Putin recently announced a major increase in state spending and welfare payments in a move to improve Russians’ livelihoods.

Russia's minimum wage increased to 12,130 rubles ($190) per month on Jan. 1.

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