

Key Witness in Serebrennikov's Fraud Trial Claims 'Severe Pressure' From Investigators

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Kirill Serebrennikov [Sergei Karpukhin / TASS](#)

A key witness in a multimillion-dollar criminal fraud case involving prominent theater director Kirill Serebrennikov has claimed that investigators obtained her testimony under duress, the *Kommersant* business daily [reported](#) Monday.

Serebrennikov is suspected of embezzling 133 million rubles (\$1.9 million) in a case that his supporters have criticized as politically motivated. The artistic director of Moscow's Gogol Center theater and two other suspects were released on bail in 2019 after a year and a half under house arrest.

Related article: [Russian Theater Director Serebrennikov's Fraud Case to Be Re-Tried, Court Says](#)

Eleonora Filimonova, a former assistant accountant to another suspect in the case, was one of two employees to claim in 2017 that Serebrennikov's studio ran "[slush funds](#)."

Filimonova told the judge Monday that investigators had called her a "criminal" and threatened to jail her if she didn't sign the needed papers, according to *Kommersant*.

"They exerted severe pressure on me. ... They made me sign a statement that I knew everything and that there was criminal activity," Filimonova testified.

"I no longer had the strength to resist what they were saying," she was quoted by *Kommersant* as saying.

Filimonova is at least the [fourth witness](#) to claim providing testimony to investigators under duress.

One of the three earlier witnesses, all Russian Culture Ministry employees, claimed that investigators threatened that "you're either the prosecution's witness or a defendant."

While in home confinement, Serebrennikov [lived](#) through the premieres of his ballet at the Bolshoi Theater and his film at the Cannes Film Festival, as well as the loss of his mother.

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