

Russian Billionaire Abramovich Sues Author Catherine Belton for Defamation

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Roman Abramovich. **Vyacheslav Prokofyev / TASS**

Russian billionaire and Chelsea Football Club owner Roman Abramovich has launched a [defamation](#) lawsuit against author Catherine Belton over claims that he had bought the club at President Vladimir Putin's orders.

According to Belton's critically acclaimed 2020 book "Putin's People," Abramovich allegedly bought Chelsea in 2003 at Putin's direction as part of an effort to raise Russia's profile in Britain and the wider West.

Related article: [Abramovich Withdraws British Visa Application After Delays, Media Reports](#)

Abramovich's legal team said it issued legal proceedings for defamation on his behalf against Belton and publisher HarperCollins following efforts to "find an amicable resolution," according to a statement on Chelsea's website.

“The false allegations in this book are having a damaging effect,” Russia’s 10th-richest billionaire said.

Abramovich said the English High Court previously held the claims false in earlier legal proceedings, adding that he hopes the courts “will give me a fair hearing, as they have in the past.”

The Independent reported that a British judge ruled in 2018 that the claims, made by fugitive billionaire Sergei Pugachev in a separate legal dispute, were “[self-serving](#)” and “impossible to believe.”

In a statement Tuesday, HarperCollins' UK imprint William Collins Books [confirmed](#) that Abramovich had filed legal proceedings against HarperCollins and Belton. It said that attempts at reaching a resolution with Abramovich had fallen through in August 2020 and said the publisher and Belton would continue to defend "the claim and the right to report on matters of considerable public interest.”

Abramovich, 54, reportedly withdrew his UK visa renewal application in 2018 after British authorities delayed it due to tighter vetting of the applicants’ sources of wealth. Abramovich, whose net worth is estimated at \$14.3 billion by Forbes, acquired Israeli citizenship later that year.

Belton is a special correspondent for Reuters, a former Moscow correspondent for The Financial Times and has previously reported for The Moscow Times.

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