

Russian Billionaires, Rosneft Sue Over Book on Putin's Rise – FT

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“Putin’s People” centers on the rise of President Vladimir Putin and his relationship with wealthy oligarchs. [Kremlin.ru](#)

Three Russian tycoons and the Rosneft oil giant have filed libel and data protection lawsuits in Britain against the publisher of journalist Catherine Belton’s acclaimed 2020 book “Putin’s People,” the Financial Times has [reported](#).

The billionaires — Mikhail Fridman, his longtime business partner Peter Aven and real estate tycoon Shalva Chigirinsky — and Rosneft filed the flurry of suits in March and April, around the one-year deadline for libel actions in British law, FT reported Saturday.

HarperCollins defended “Putin’s People,” which centers on the rise of President Vladimir Putin and his relationship with wealthy oligarchs, as “authoritative, important and conscientiously sourced work.”

Related article: [Russian Billionaire Abramovich Sues Author Catherine Belton for Defamation](#)

“We will robustly defend this acclaimed and groundbreaking book and the right to report on matters of considerable public interest,” FT quoted the publisher as saying.

Fridman’s spokesperson told FT that neither the banking, retail and telecoms tycoon nor Alfa Bank Group head Aven had prior knowledge of the other lawsuits and that they did not coordinate legal strategy with the other plaintiffs.

The outlet said that British free expression activists have called for reforms to London’s judicial system, which they accused of becoming the global elite’s venue of choice for lawsuits against critical journalism in the United Kingdom and worldwide.

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

Billionaire Roman Abramovich previously filed a defamation [lawsuit](#) against Belton and HarperCollins over the book. Abramovich disputed the book’s claims — sourced to fugitive billionaire Sergei Pugachev, whom a British court described as an unreliable witness — that he bought the Chelsea Football Club in 2003 at Putin’s direction to raise Russia’s profile in the West.

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