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Ukraine's Richest Oligarch Sues Russia Over 'Stolen' Grain and Steel Assets

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Rinat Akhmetov. **Valery Levitin / Kommersant**

Ukraine's richest oligarch has filed a lawsuit against Russia in Europe's top human rights court, citing "grievous violations" in Russia's seizure of Ukrainian property and resources since the start of Moscow's invasion in late February.

Rinat Akhmetov, a steel tycoon who owns Ukraine's largest steel manufacturer Metainvest, filed the lawsuit in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) after the company's assets were seized by invading Russian forces.

The lawsuit seeks "relief for Russia's blockading, looting, destruction and diversion of grain and metals," according to a statement circulated Monday by Akhmetov's System Capital Management group.

A native of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, one of the focal points of Russia's ongoing invasion, Akhmetov claims a number of steel manufacturing plants, coal mines and other businesses in eastern and southern Ukraine have been stolen by Russian forces since the start

of its invasion in February.

Metainvest has also reported serious damage to its assets, including the Azovstal steel factory in Mariupol, which was besieged by Russian forces in March and April as the city's last Ukrainian forces sheltered there.

"Russia's crimes against Ukraine and our people are egregious, and those guilty of them must be held liable . . . This lawsuit is one of the first international legal steps against Russia to stop their ongoing crimes, destruction of the Ukrainian economy and the plundering of Ukrainian assets," Akhmetov said in the statement.

The company said that more than 234,000 tons of steel manufactured by its Ilyich Steel and Azovstal factories had been in storage when Russia's invasion of Ukraine began, of which about 28,000 tons were already loaded onto four ships in the port of Mariupol.

The company told the Financial Times that 2,500 tons of that steel had been taken by a Russian-owned ship to the Russian city of Rostov-on-Don.

Occupying Russian forces have repeatedly been accused of stealing Ukrainian resources since late February.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said last week that Ankara was investigating claims that Russia had shipped stolen Ukrainian grain to countries including Turkey.

Meanwhile, agricultural products such as cherries, potatoes and cabbages from the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions were reportedly spotted in Belarusian markets over the weekend, according to the Poland-based Belarusian media outlet Nexta.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov brushed off questions about Akhmetov's lawsuit Monday, saying Russia had withdrawn from the court's jurisdiction and would not recognize any of its rulings.

"The answer here is completely obvious," Peskov said, without elaborating further.

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