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Chelyabinsk Court Orders Billionaire Strukov to Pay $50M Over Mining Accident

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Konstantin Strukov. **Donat Sorokin / TASS**

A court has ordered mining tycoon and Chelyabinsk region lawmaker Konstantin Strukov to pay 3.9 billion rubles ($49.3 million) in damages for environmental harm caused in one of Russia's worst mining accidents in recent years, the Interfax news agency reported on Wednesday.

Strukov's former company, the gold producer Yuzhuralzoloto, was accused of systemic violations that led to an April 2024 dam collapse, which released toxic waste into nearby rivers and contaminated farmland.

Chelyabinsk's Plastsky City Court ultimately found Strukov personally liable for the accident, citing his failure to invest in critical infrastructure and enforce safety regulations and labor protections at the work site, according to court documents.

The regional court system's press service told Interfax that Strukov was found guilty on Tuesday evening of having caused major environmental damage as a result of negligence.

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Strukov denied any wrongdoing during closed-door hearings and argued that the case was politically motivated. It was not immediately clear if Strukov's defense team planned to appeal the ruling.

The Prosecutor General's Office filed the lawsuit in July, later merging it with several environmental claims submitted by regional prosecutors. Co-defendants initially included senior environmental and investigative officials, but Strukov ultimately faced the charges alone.

The ruling marks another setback for Strukov, whose 68% stake in Yuzhuralzoloto was seized by the government in July after a court found that his assets were obtained through corrupt means.

Strukov, who serves as deputy chairman of the Chelyabinsk regional legislative assembly and is a member of the ruling United Russia party, is among Russia's 100 wealthiest people, according to Forbes, with an estimated net worth of $1.9 billion.

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