



KHODORKOVSKY
ХОДОРКОВСКИЙ

BIOGRAPHY

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SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

Mikhail Khodorkovsky is a Russian philanthropist who has dedicated his life to promoting the values of a liberal democracy in his home country. Imprisoned by Vladimir Putin's regime, he was one of the longest serving political prisoners in modern Russia.

Prior to his arrest in October 2003, Khodorkovsky was the head of Yukos, one of Russia's largest oil producers. Khodorkovsky transformed what was an outdated Soviet enterprise, introducing modern and transparent standards, and developing the company into one of Russia's most successful companies.

A leading businessman, Khodorkovsky was also an increasingly outspoken critic of corruption in Russian life, and the authoritarian direction of Russian politics. To that end, he began funding opposition parties, and established the Open Russia Foundation, a non-governmental organisation promoting a strong and effective civil society.

Having become the most outspoken critic of the Putin regime, Khodorkovsky was arrested and charged with fraud and tax evasion. He was sentenced to nine years in prison, increased to eleven years after a second trial. The two trials were criticized as unfair and politically motivated by Russian and international commentators alike; and in 2011, Amnesty International



declared the two men 'prisoners of conscience.'

Khodorkovsky wrote extensively about the injustices he saw in prison and about his vision for Russia, which turned him into a leading political commentator in Russia and a worldwide figure.

In December 2013, shortly before the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics, Khodorkovsky was unexpectedly pardoned. Upon his release he declared that he would continue with his support of political prisoners and the cause of civil society in Russia. In September 2014, Khodorkovsky launched the Open Russia movement, with the aim of uniting Russian citizens in support of the rule of law, free and fair elections, and a strong civil society.



EARLY YEARS

Mikhail Khodorkovsky was born on June 26, 1963, the only child of Marina and Boris Khodorkovsky, who worked as chemical engineers at an industrial tool plant. He followed in the footsteps of his parents, studying at Moscow's Mendeleev Institute of Chemical Technologies.

From a young age, Khodorkovsky saw the importance of modernising Russia's increasingly outmoded technological and scientific infrastructure; and in 1987, at the age of 24, he founded the Youth Centre for Scientific and Technical Development, to provide market research to large manufacturers and introduce them to new technologies. In 1989, following the development of a successful import-export business, Khodorkovsky acquired a banking licence, and with several business partners formed Bank Menatep, one of the first commercial banks in Russia. Subsequently, Khodorkovsky and his business partners established Rosprom, a diversified holding company, precursor of Group Menatep Limited (GML).



YUKOS

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia was left with huge state-owned industries, many of them run by ineffective 'red managers' resistant to modernisation, and plagued by corruption and organised crime.

In 1996, Khodorkovsky and his business partners invested in a majority stake in Yukos at a cost of \$309 million, the price set by the state in the privatisation process under the Yeltsin administration's 'loans for shares' programme, through which investors lent the state money in return for the right to purchase state assets. At the time, Yukos did not look to be such a wonderful deal. Saddled with debts of between \$2-3 billion ([read more in The Yukos Library](#)), Yukos was producing just half a million barrels of oil per day, compared to the 1.4 million barrels it had been pumping in 1987, at a cost of up to \$12 per barrel, which was more than the then selling price.

Russia prohibited foreign investors from acquiring assets in its oil industry. In fact, few investors had any appetite for Russian assets due to the many risks inherent in Russia in

the 1990s, including the prospect of a return to power of the communist party in the 1996 presidential election. In the months prior to the election, according to polls, President Boris Yeltsin lagged far behind communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, who had announced that he would reverse privatisations if elected.

Although in the end Yeltsin was re-elected, matters for Yukos worsened with the [1998 Russian financial crisis](#). The price of oil was \$8 per barrel, and the production cost was \$12 per barrel. Demand on the domestic oil market plummeted and exports were blocked. There was no money to pay salaries or to pay down debts.

With his partners, Khodorkovsky implemented an [historic turnaround](#) based on best international business practice – looking for efficiencies wherever possible. In the span of just a few years, they reduced per barrel costs to \$1.5 and increased production to over one million barrels per day.

In 2002, Vedomosti, Russia's leading business daily, jointly published by the Financial Times and the Wall Street Journal, awarded Khodorkovsky its

annual "Entrepreneur of the Year" prize. Yukos was the envy of Khodorkovsky's peers and many of his contemporaries began plotting the "[Yukosisation](#)" of their own companies. Shares in Yukos could be acquired not only in Russia but also on the major stock exchanges of Europe and the United States (Yukos was considering a full floatation on the New York Stock Exchange). By mid 2003, a merger with Sibneft had been agreed, and talks for selling a major stake to Exxon Mobil or Chevron were well advanced.

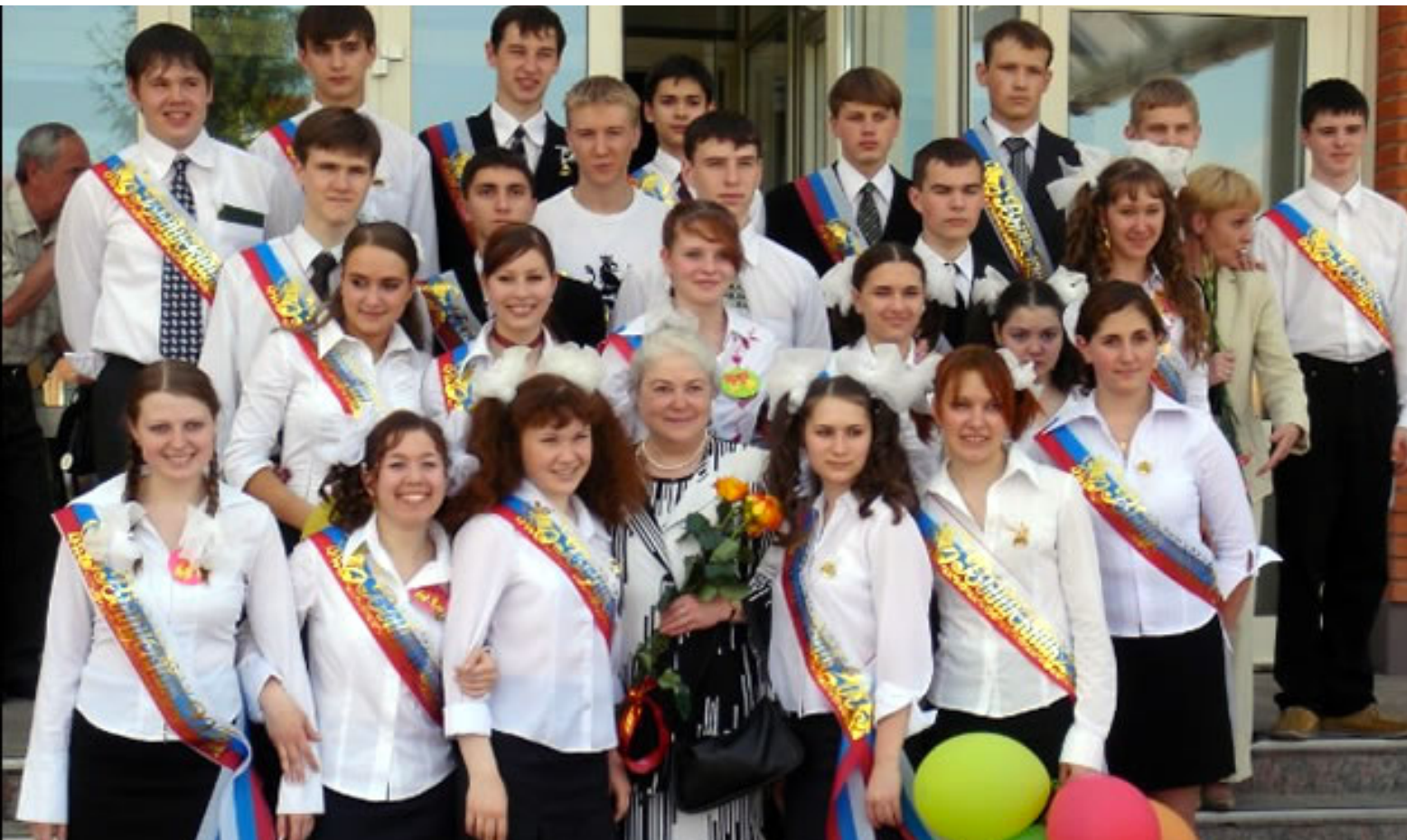
By 2003, Yukos and its subsidiaries had a market capitalisation of [\\$21 billion](#), and produced [20 per cent](#) of Russia's oil – the equivalent of 2 per cent of world production. The company had become the second-largest taxpayer in Russia after the state gas monolith Gazprom, contributing [4.1 per cent](#) of the Russian federal budget.

President Putin himself [congratulated](#) Yukos on its 10th birthday in 2003. He was quoted as saying: "Competently employing modern scientific and technical achievements, Yukos is confidently moving on a trajectory of stable growth."

PHILANTHROPY

Khodorkovsky launched his first civic project in 1994, founding the [Podmoskovny Lyceum](#) on the outskirts of Moscow. The lyceum's mission is to provide a rigorous education to underprivileged children – in particular orphans, victims of terrorism, and children of military servicemen. Run by highly qualified staff dedicated to creating a caring atmosphere, and to providing the best opportunities for each child, the goal of the lyceum is to ensure that by the end of their time there, the children are ready and able to qualify for a state grant to attend higher education in Russia.

From the first, for Khodorkovsky, philanthropy had always been about the improvement of people's lives. But the experience of the 1998 crisis had profoundly [changed Khodorkovsky's outlook](#). As a successful business leader and patriot (he had been an enthusiastic member of the Komsomol in his youth), he came to believe that he had a responsibility to help develop Russian society at a more fundamental level. After 1998, he



thus expanded his own [philanthropic activities](#), and also Yukos's corporate social responsibility programmes. Indeed, Yukos became Russia's leader in the field, with a particular focus on supporting schools, hospitals, and libraries in communities where the company operated. Yukos helped to fund employee mortgages and offered generous resettlement grants. In 2002, Yukos was recognised by the Russian government as the "Best Company for Compensation and Social Payments Programmes" and for "Implementation of Social Programmes at Enterprises and Organisations."

As part of Khodorkovsky's commitment to [developing Russia's global links](#), in 2001, Yukos also funded the United States Library of Congress with a grant of \$1 million, earmarked for a Russian rule of law programme called Open World, to offer fellowships for Russian scholars and students with leadership potential.

And in 2001, Khodorkovsky and Yukos shareholders also created the Yukos-funded Open Russia Foundation, with a view towards sustainably building and strengthening civil society in Russia. Funds were disbursed through philanthropic programmes and competitive grant programmes in a wide variety of educational, cultural, and social spheres. Programmes included the Federation for Internet Education, establishing training centres across the country to teach schoolteachers to use computers and access the Internet; a programme in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and Mass Communications, and professional library associations, to support the modernisation of rural libraries through computers, Internet access and training; a "New Civilisation" programme aimed at

young people, based on the values and practices of democracy, civil society, and market economics; and funding for a "Russian Booker Prize" for literature. In addition to such programmes, Open Russia was amongst the few domestically-funded organisations that made grants to human rights organisations.

In 2003, Yukos pledged \$100 million in support, over the course of a decade, for the [Moscow State Humanities University](#). In the same year, Khodorkovsky also provided a major endowment to support the [Khodorkovsky Foundation](#), a UK-registered charity that provides scholarships for higher education, and makes donations to educational establishments. The Khodorkovsky Foundation's endowment ranks it amongst the largest of such charities operating in Russia, and today it continues to provide support for Russia's students and educational establishments. The Foundation also supports the [Oxford-Russia Fund](#), which has provided financial support and scholarships for Russian students to study at the University of Oxford.

Following Khodorkovsky's arrest in 2003, the Russian authorities launched a concerted campaign against his philanthropic legacy. Open Russia, by then, one of Russia's largest foundations, donating approximately \$15 million per year to a wide variety of civic and charitable groups and institutions, [was closed](#) down by the authorities in 2006. And in order to discourage enrolment at the Podmoskovny Lyceum, Russian authorities targeted the guardians of students with [large tax assessments](#) based on the value of schooling received; and also [harassed](#) the Lyceum's administration.



FALLING AFOUL OF THE KREMLIN

Since the late 1990s, Khodorkovsky had taken steps to transform Yukos according to western business models, while at the same time increasing his political advocacy activities, including numerous trips abroad for speaking engagements on governance issues in Russia.

Disturbed at the way in which Russia was becoming a steadily more authoritarian

delivering speeches on the need to develop civil society, and on the importance of Russia transitioning towards a vibrant democratic state with checks and balances between the branches of power.

In terms of improving the corporate governance of Yukos to international standards, these steps included the

introduction of corporate transparency, the adoption of western accounting standards, the hiring of western management, the creation of an independent board of directors with a corporate governance sub-committee, growth through mergers and acquisitions, and increased western investments. But at a time when more and more questions were being raised in public about the opaque way in which state companies were being run, these actions marked Khodorkovsky as an outspoken leader who was pro-Western; and challenged in particular the non-transparent means by which government and business operated in the key Russian energy sector. These innovative, modern practices, along with the possibility of GML selling a major stake to either Exxon Mobil or Chevron, deeply unsettled the Kremlin.

In 2002 and 2003, Khodorkovsky became increasingly outspoken about the country's rampant corruption and on the need to create a more robust civil society. On February 19, in a televised meeting between President Putin and the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, Khodorkovsky gave a presentation about the state of corruption in Russia. He cited numerous statistics showing that

corruption cost the Russian economy over \$30 billion per year. He said that the administration "must be willing to show its readiness to get rid of some odious figures" in the regime, to prove its readiness and ability to combat corruption. An angry President Putin would have none of it, and replied with clear threats to Khodorkovsky, suddenly questioning the legitimacy of Yukos's growth.

Khodorkovsky had now become a public irritant and powerful opponent of Kremlin policies. And Yukos had become too attractive an asset for predators to resist expropriating.

It was in 2003 that the attack on Yukos began; a combination of spurious back tax claims, asset freezing orders, the manipulation of legal procedures, and the imposition of unrealistic tax payment deadlines ultimately led to the seizure of Yukos's crown jewel production asset, Yuganskneftegaz (YNG), in June 2004. By 2007 the destruction of Yukos was complete.

For more about Yukos [click here](#)

For more details on the history of the Yukos cases, please visit [The Yukos Library](#).

ARREST

On July 2, 2003, Khodorkovsky's business associate [Platon Lebedev was arrested](#) in a Moscow hospital where he was receiving treatment. He was charged with fraud and tax evasion. Many perceived this to be a warning shot fired at Khodorkovsky to force him to flee the country. But, aware of the dangers, Khodorkovsky nevertheless decided to stay in Russia. He was quoted as saying that "I will not become a political exile."



In a predawn raid on October 25, 2003, armed Russian commandos stormed a Yukos chartered plane refuelling on the tarmac of a Siberian airport. Mikhail Khodorkovsky was arrested at gunpoint. He was ostensibly being arrested to appear as a witness in an investigation underway in Moscow, but within hours after being delivered to the authorities

there who sought to question him, Khodorkovsky was charged with fraud and tax evasion.

Khodorkovsky's arrest occurred just prior to Russia's December 2003 parliamentary election, and the March 2004 presidential election, thereby eliminating him from active engagement in the political arena.



FIRST TRIAL (2004-2005)

The first trial of Khodorkovsky and Lebedev began in June 2004 and concluded in May 2005. Independent observers noted that the defendants were subjected to injustices in the interpretation and application of Russian law, while the authorities concurrently pursued an attack on Yukos through the pretext of reassessments of the company's tax payments. The Meshchansky Court found both men guilty of almost every charge, sentencing them to nine years in prison, a sentence subsequently reduced by the Moscow City Court to eight years during an otherwise unsuccessful appeal process in September 2005.

For more information about the First Trial please [click here](#)

SENT TO THE GULAG



After the trial and failed appeal, Khodorkovsky was sent to one of the most remote penal colonies in all of Russia, some 6,500 kilometres east of Moscow in the town of Krasnokamensk, close to Russia's borders with China and Mongolia. The Krasnokamensk penal colony is situated near a uranium mine that has contaminated the area with radioactive waste. Lebedev, meanwhile, was sent to a remote penal colony in the town of Kharp, on the Yamalo-Nenets Peninsula, above the Arctic Circle.

SECOND TRIAL (2009-2010)

In 2007, after four years in detention, Khodorkovsky and Lebedev were to become eligible for release on parole under Russian law, having served half of their eight-year sentences. By then, Yukos had been largely destroyed through bogus tax reassessments, forced bankruptcy proceedings, and rigged auctions, with the majority of its assets taken over by state-controlled Rosneft. However, the Russian authorities still did not want to see Khodorkovsky and Lebedev released. Given their eligibility for parole in 2007, or at the latest, upon completion of their eight-year sentences in 2011, new charges were manufactured, and proceedings were instigated against Khodorkovsky and Lebedev.



Photo credit: REUTERS/Sergei Karpukhin

The timing of the new charges, announced in February 2007, ensured that Khodorkovsky was behind bars during the December 2007 parliamentary election, and the March 2008 presidential election.

This time Khodorkovsky and Lebedev were accused of embezzling the entire oil production of Yukos over a period of six years leading up to 2003, i.e. 350 million metric tons of oil worth over \$25.4 billion, and of “laundering” the proceeds from the sale of this oil, i.e. over \$21.4 billion. The allegations had no credible grounding either in the facts described or in the legal terms invoked by prosecutors. The indictment was a compendium of factual and legal impossibilities. Both in the indictment and at trial, the prosecutors failed to connect any conduct by the defendants to any viable legal theory of criminal liability. Instead the charges were sustained purely by prosecutorial diktat obeyed by the court.

The second trial started in March 2009 at Moscow’s Khamovnichesky Court. Khodorkovsky and Lebedev were found guilty in December 2010. Following a failed appeal in May 2011, their imprisonment was extended to 2016, which precluded their release in 2011 upon completion of their initial eight-year sentences.

After two years of obstruction and delays, a supervisory appeal hearing finally took place at the Moscow City Court on December 20, 2012. Despite the enormous weight of legal and factual arguments undermining it, the appeal judges confirmed the December 2010 guilty verdict. The hearing did, however, bring forward the scheduled release date of both Khodorkovsky and Lebedev by

two years, as a result of 2011 changes to Russian sentencing guidelines.

US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton said raised “serious questions about the rule of law being overshadowed by political considerations. This and similar cases have a negative impact on Russia’s reputation for fulfilling its international human rights obligations and improving its investment climate.”



An image from the animated sequence in Cyril Tusch's documentary “Khodorkovsky.”

The International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute had a full time observer at the second trial and concluded in their September 2011 trial observation report that the proceedings were not fair, and were incapable of producing clear proof to sustain the verdict. Similarly, in December 2011 an official inquiry organised by then-President Dmitry Medvedev’s own Human Rights Council identified serious and widespread violations of the law in the second trial, leading the Council to call for an annulment of the verdict. Experts

involved in the inquiry categorically rejected the court’s findings of illegality in Yukos’s operations and found no evidence proving allegations of embezzlement or money laundering.

In 2011 Amnesty International declared both Khodorkovsky and his imprisoned business partner Platon Lebedev to be prisoners of conscience. “... there can no longer be any doubt that their second trial was deeply flawed and politically motivated,” said Nicola Duckworth, Amnesty International’s Director for Europe and Central Asia.

“For several years now these two men have been trapped in a judicial vortex that answers to political not legal considerations. Today’s verdict makes it clear that Russia’s lower courts are unable, or unwilling, to deliver justice in their cases.”

For more information about the second trial please [click here](#).



SENT TO ANOTHER GULAG

In June 2011, Khodorkovsky was sent to Penal Colony No. 7, near the town of Segezha in the region of Karelia, bordering Finland. The colony is located on the west coast of Lake Vygozero, on the route of the White Sea-Baltic Canal. The canal was constructed in the Soviet era by the forced labour of gulag inmates, during which thousands of prisoners died. Meanwhile, Lebedev was transferred to Penal Colony No. 14 in the city of Velsk in the neighbouring region of Archangel.

[Click here](#) for more information about Khodorkovsky's prison conditions at the time.

WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN



Throughout Khodorkovsky's years in prison, there had been many voices raised around the world, about the injustice that had been done. The worldwide campaign for the release of Mikhail Khodorkovsky took many forms – in parliaments, theatres, opera houses, on the street. The many events included:

Berlin Wall Domino

9 November 2009, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, a large public art spectacle of falling dominoes was set up, measuring over 1.2 km (0.75 miles), from the spot formerly known as Checkpoint Charlie to the Reichstag. One of these dominoes carried Khodorkovsky's image, and was signed by dozens of supporters.

Solidarity concert for political freedom in the Gewandshaus zu Leipzig, Berlin

That evening, on 9 November 2009, the concert "Reaching out a hand – a musical plea", was presented by violinist and conductor Gidon Kremer and the composer Giya Kancheli, to publicise the plight of people fighting for the right to personal and political freedom.

The highlight of the evening was the German premiere of Arvo Pärt's Fourth Symphony, dedicated to Mikhail Khodorkovsky, and performed by Kremer and his Kremerata Baltica.

The 900 guests included politicians of the German Bundestag and the Saxonian parliament as well as representatives of the City of Leipzig, Amnesty International and the Russian human rights organisation Memorial.

**Gidon Kremer &
Kremerata Baltica**
Roman Kofman, Dirigent
Giedre Dirvanauskaitė, Marie-Elisabeth Hecker,
Heinrich Schiff, Violoncello/Matvey Afanassiev, Klavier

Donnerstag, 29. Oktober 2009, 20 Uhr | Großer Saal

„Die Hand reichen...“ Ein musikalisches Plädoyer
Max Bruch: Kol Nidrei für Violoncello und Orchester d-Moll op. 47
Arvo Pärt: 4. Sinfonie („Los Angeles“), gewidmet Mikhail Chodorkowski
Deutscher Erstaufführung
Dmitri Schostakowitsch: 2. Teil für Klarinette, Waldhorn und Violoncello e-Moll op. 6
Giya Kancheli: In der Gehen, gewidmet Mikhail Chodorkowski und Gidon Kremer

www.gewandhaus-leipzig.de
www.kremerata-baltica.com
www.kremer.com

**GEWANDHAUS
LEIPZIG**



“Sketches of (in)justice” in the European Parliament, Brussels

On February 2, 2010, more than a hundred people, including members of the European Parliament, Russian politicians, officials from European institutions, human rights activists and artists, attended the opening of the exhibition “Sketches of (in)justice” held in the European Parliament. The exhibition showcased some 30 courtroom sketches and paintings by different Russian artists, illustrating the legal battles waged against Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev.

Prominent guest speakers included the former Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, Chairwoman of the European Parliament’s Subcommittee on Human Rights MEP Heidi Hautala and Memorial’s Executive Director Elena Zhemkova, winner of the European Parliament’s 2009 Sakharov Prize.

Mikhail Kasyanov, Russian prime minister under President Putin (and still in office at the time of Khodorkovsky’s and Lebedev’s arrests in 2003), was clear in his criticism of the current government. “Putin told me [the trial] was political,” and he added that, “all the charges were fabricated.”

The courtroom drawings had already been exhibited in Moscow and London, and were later shown at the Berlin Wall Museum in Berlin, and then in Paris.

Musica Liberat Concert dedicated to Khodorkovsky and Lebedev

The ‘Musica Liberat’ concert took place in Strasbourg on July 5, 2011. Its aim was to focus attention on the lack of human rights and respect for the rule of law in Russia.



The event brought together world-renowned musicians, including Martha Argerich, Evgeny Kissin, Gidon Kremer, Mischa Maisky, Anatoli Kotscherga, and Roman Kofman accompanied by the Kremerata Baltica. The organisers chose to dedicate the concert to Khodorkovsky and Lebedev because they view the two men as “living symbols of the world’s failed hopes for rule of law and freedom of expression in Russia. They have now spent almost 8 years in jail and the gross mishandling of their case has inspired imitation by corrupt officials across Russia, spreading impunity and deepening corruption throughout the country.”



Kirill Nikitenko photography exhibition “Russian Visionaries – Into the light”

On March 8, 2012, a photography exhibition by the well-known Moscow photographer, Kirill Nikitenko, opened in Paris, titled “Russian Visionaries – Into the light,” and featuring the portraits of Russian opposition leaders, including Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

During the opening reception, Pavel Khodorkovsky, head of the Institute for Modern Russia, and his mother Elena Khodorkovskaya, curator of the exhibition, explained how the concept of the exhibition had actually been invented some months before the demonstrations began in Moscow.

François Zimeray, French ambassador for human rights said “I was in court during the second trial [of Mikhail Khodorkovsky] and I was struck by the strange atmosphere of the trial, with Khodorkovsky dismantling point by point the accusations but no one listening: not the prosecutor, not even the judge.”

The exhibition was also presented in New York, Moscow and London.



RELEASE

Both the Kremlin and Vladimir Putin consistently commented on the case against Khodorkovsky; and these comments gave no indication that his release was anything other than a distant prospect. When it came, Khodorkovsky's release was unexpected.

On 19 December 2013, at the very end of a press conference held in the Kremlin by President Putin, the president, in what appeared to be an off-hand remark to a reporter, mentioned that Khodorkovsky had written a letter appealing for a pardon, citing humanitarian factors. Putin said that he was minded to grant the request.

One day later, on 20th December 2013, Mikhail Khodorkovsky was released by presidential pardon. In total, he had served 3,709 days in prison (a little over 10 years), and had gone through two separate show trials.

Khodorkovsky flew directly to Berlin after the release, where he was greeted by the former

German Foreign Minister Hans-Dieter Genscher, who had assisted in negotiating the pardon. A few days later, he gave a press conference at the Checkpoint Charlie Museum in Berlin, which was attended by more than a hundred international media.

Khodorkovsky issued a brief statement upon his release.

“The issue of admission of guilt was not raised. I would like to thank everyone who has been following the Yukos case all these years for the support you provided to me, my family and all those who were unjustly convicted and continue to be persecuted. I am very much looking forward to the minute when I will be able to hug my close ones and personally shake hands with all my friends and associates. I am constantly thinking of those who continue to remain imprisoned.”

“You should not regard me as a symbol that there aren’t any political prisoners left in Russia any more,” Khodorkovsky said during the Berlin press conference. “I ask you to regard me as a symbol that when civil society wants to accomplish something, its efforts are capable of bringing about the release of even those people that nobody ever imagined could be released. We just need to continue to work towards the goal of ensuring that no political prisoners remain in Russia, and indeed in other country in the world either. At any rate, I fully intend to do everything I can towards achieving this goal.”

Khodorkovsky’s release was warmly welcomed by numerous international observers, including U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton, among others.

RETURN TO THE PUBLIC EYE

After spending several months privately focusing on family, Khodorkovsky returned to the public eye when the conflict between Russia and Ukraine began to reach a dangerous threshold. On March 3, 2014 [he issued a statement](#) pleading for peace and dialogue, declaring his willingness to travel to any part of Ukraine to act as a mediator. By March 9, he had arrived to Ukraine and delivered a speech at Maidan before a crowd of thousands, where he spoke about the horrors of the violence that took place in Kiev with the consent of the Russian authorities.

“I want you to know that there is another Russia,” [he said during the Maidan speech](#). “There are people there who, during those days, took to the streets to participate in anti-war rallies. They did so despite arrests and many years that they will have to spend in prison. There are people there who value the friendship between the people of Ukraine and the people of Russia over their personal freedom.”

Khodorkovsky again returned to Ukraine on April 24-25, where he organised along with other public intellectuals like Lyudmila Ulitskaya and Yuriy Lutsenko the [“Ukraine-Russia: the Dialogue”](#) forum, while also travelling on a fact-finding mission to the conflict areas of Kharkov and Donetsk in Eastern Ukraine.



Among his many travels, Khodorkovsky has delivered numerous keynote speeches, including at the Ukraine Dialogue, [the Kiev Polytechnic Institute](#), [the University of Zurich](#), and the [Freedom House 2014 Awards Dinner](#).

During his imprisonment and after his release, Khodorkovsky [received several distinguished honours](#), including the Lech Walesa Award as well as the “Man of the Year” award from Gazeta Wyborcza. His book, My Fellow Prisoners, has now been translated and published in numerous languages, greeted by outstanding critical reception.

On the 20th of September 2014, Khodorkovsky [launched his civil society movement Open Russia](#) with a live event in Berlin and an online forum attended by thousands from across the world.

AWARDS AND NOMINATIONS

For his acclaimed writings and brave commitment to a free and democratic Russia, Khodorkovsky has received or has been nominated for numerous prizes.



Sakharov Prize for Journalism as an Act of Conscience

In December 2011, Khodorkovsky was among the top four finalists nominated for the [Sakharov Prize for Journalism](#) as an Act of Conscience, for his articles published in Novaya Gazeta. Since 2001, the prize has been awarded to journalists who defend the values of the eminent Soviet nuclear physicist, dissident and human rights activist Andrei Sakharov. Khodorkovsky's mother, Marina, [received an honorary certificate](#) on her son's behalf.



Dr Rainer Hildebrandt Medal

In December 2010, Khodorkovsky was awarded the Dr Rainer Hildebrandt Medal, an international human rights award in recognition of extraordinary, non-violent commitment to human rights. Khodorkovsky won the award alongside his human rights lawyer, Yuri Schmidt, and Hungarian reformer Imre Pozsgay. The jury for the award includes, amongst others, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Henry Kissinger, President of Germany Joachim Gauck and former German

foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher. In a laudatory speech, Markus Löning, the German government's human rights commissioner, [expressed his respect for Khodorkovsky](#) for standing for a free Russia where human rights have meaning. [In a letter to Khodorkovsky](#), Nobel Literature Prize Laureate Herta Müller underlined that he is imprisoned because "he called for democracy in Russia" and compared his commitment to a peaceful transition with that of Chinese Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Liu Xiaobo.



Newsmaker of the Year

In October 2010, Ekho Moskvy Radio announced the creation of a Newsmaker of the Year Award, giving the title to a different individual for the past twenty years. For 2003, the year of his arrest, the award was attributed to Khodorkovsky. Other recipients included the murdered journalist Anna Politkovskaya for 2006 and Russia's market reform architect Yegor Gaidar for 1992.

European of the Week

In May 2010, Khodorkovsky was named "European of the week" by Radio France International for his ongoing capacity to force the Kremlin to react, despite his imprisonment since 2003. The award came after the success of a hunger strike by Khodorkovsky, which drew then-President Medvedev's attention to the disrespect of Russian officials and courts for recent legal reforms. RFI awarded Khodorkovsky this honour again in 2013, following his 50th birthday on June 26.



Znamya Literary Prize

In January 2010, Khodorkovsky received a literary prize for his correspondence with Russian Booker Prize recipient Lyudmila Ulitskaya. The annual prize, which has been awarded by Znamya magazine for more than 20 years, was [received by Khodorkovsky's daughter Anastasia](#) at a ceremony in Moscow. The prize funds were donated to the Podmoskovny Lyceum in Koralovo.

Lech Walesa Award

On September 29th 2013 Mikhail Khodorkovsky's son Pavel received [the Lech Walesa Award](#) from Lech Walesa, former President of Poland and leader of the Solidarity movement. Khodorkovsky was being recognized for "courage in promoting civil society values," building foundations of economic freedom and "unwavering struggle for justice and human dignity."



Photo Credit: Slawomir Kaminski /
Agencja Gazeta

Gazeta Wyborcza Man of the Year

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the launch of the Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza on May 9th 2014, Mikhail Khodorkovsky was presented with the '[2014 Man of the Year](#)' award by editor Adam Michnik. Michnik said Khodorkovsky became a symbol of truth about today's Russia, symbol of weakness of Russian ruling elites and symbol of Russian pride and honour, courage and hope.