

Uralkali Says Minsk Guilty of 'Political Persecution'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Potash giant Uralkali said it was prepared to go to court to defend itself against attacks by Belarus in the deepening dispute between the ex-Soviet states over the collapse of the world's largest potash alliance.

The company said Belarus was guilty of political persecution after the country detained Uralkali chief executive Vladislav Baumgertner in Minsk last week. Belarus also said Monday that it had asked Interpol to search for Uralkali's top shareholder, billionaire Suleiman Kerimov.

"The company has applied to the appropriate Russian authorities with [a] request for assistance in putting an immediate stop [to the] politically motivated persecution of Uralkali's employees," the firm said in a statement issued late Tuesday.

"Uralkali will defend its interests in strict adherence to the applicable law — including judicial

means," it said.

Uralkali sparked the row when it abruptly quit a trading alliance with state potash producer Belaruskali in a move that could push potash prices down 25 percent in the second half of 2013 — an economic headache for Belarus, where the soil nutrient accounts for 12 percent of state revenue.

Baumgertner was detained Aug. 26 while visiting Belarus at the invitation of its prime minister. Russia subsequently announced a 25 percent reduction in oil supplies to Belarus and banned pork imports.

Russia is one the few diplomatic backers of its former Soviet neighbor after 19 years of authoritarian rule by President Alexander Lukashenko.

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