

Litvinenko Lawyers to Decide on Final Bid for Public Inquiry

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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LONDON — The widow of Alexander Litvinenko, the former Russian spy murdered in London in 2006, made a tearful appeal Friday for financial help to establish whether the Moscow government was behind the killing.

The British government in July rejected a request by coroner Robert Owen for an inquiry, which he said could have revealed whether Russia held any responsibility for the killing.

Litvinenko, 43, died after drinking tea poisoned with a rare radioactive isotope, polonium-210, in a London hotel. From his deathbed, he accused President Vladimir Putin of ordering his murder. Moscow has repeatedly denied the charge.

Marina Litvinenko has until Monday afternoon to decide whether to apply for a judicial review of the government decision, taken by Home Secretary Theresa May.

A court Thursday ruled she would have to pay legal fees of about 40,000 pounds (\$64,700) if she lost.

"It is a very important day for me because I need to take some very serious decisions," she said in tears in the hall of the Royal Courts of Justice, where she had been listening to a pre-inquest hearing.

"Almost three years ago when it started, the whole inquest, the only thing I really want is to get truth. What happened in 2006, who killed my husband and why."

"I can't easily just give up," she said.

Litvinenko's legal team, which is working pro bono, appealed to the British public for donations to cover the potential cost of the judicial review.

Under British law, inquests conducted by coroners are held when a person dies unexpectedly to determine the cause of death. It will not establish whether Russia was responsible for his murder or if the British government could have prevented it.

Pre-inquest hearings have heard that Litvinenko, who had been granted British citizenship, had worked for Britain's MI6 intelligence service and that the government had evidence which established a "prima facie case" that Russia was behind his murder.

British police and prosecutors have said there was enough evidence to bring murder charges against two former KGB agents, Andrei Lugovoi, who denies any involvement, and Dmitry Kovtun, but Moscow has resisted calls to extradite them.

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