

Khodorkovsky Pledges to Help Political Prisoners in Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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BERLIN — Former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky has arrived in Switzerland from Germany, where he had been staying since his release from a Russian jail, and reiterated his plans to campaign for the release of "political prisoners" in Russia.

Khodorkovsky will stay in Switzerland for at least several days, his spokesman Christian Hanne said Sunday, without giving further details. His three-month visa enables him to travel freely within the 26-nation Schengen area, he said.

In an interview with Swiss broadcaster SRF, Khodorkovsky said that his intention to take up the cause of those wrongfully convicted has nothing to do with politics.

He had previously denied plans to start a political career.

"I understand my responsibility to civil society, the media and the people who helped me gain freedom, and I also want to help other people."

"I cannot live in peace knowing that there are political prisoners behind bars," he said.

Khodorkovsky was granted a visa to Switzerland, where his wife Inna lives and his twin sons go to school, on Dec. 30. He applied for the visa four days after his release from a Russian prison and arrival in Germany.

A spokeswoman for Khodorkovsky said he was considering a possible move to the country, where he has business ties.

Germany, another Schengen state, had earlier granted Khodorkovsky a one-year visa allowing him to stay there.

Khodorkovsky, former head of the dismantled oil giant Yukos, was freed on Dec. 20 by a presidential pardon after serving more than a decade in prison following his arrest in 2003 and subsequent convictions for fraud, tax evasion and embezzlement.

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