

EU Lawmakers Demand U.S.-Style 'Magnitsky' Sanctions

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BRUSSELS — European lawmakers urged EU governments on Wednesday to impose sanctions on 32 Russian officials over the 2009 death of Russian whistleblower lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, in a step that would mirror U.S. measures.

Under a 2012 U.S. law named after Magnitsky, who died in prison in Russia, the U.S. targeted Russian officials involved in human rights abuses with visa bans and asset freezes. The U.S. State Department imposed sanctions on 18 people it named and a handful of others it has not named.

EU governments, which have the authority to impose sanctions, have been reluctant in the past to follow suit in a move that could put new strains on their relations with Moscow.

The bloc has expressed concerns, however, over a posthumous trial of Magnitsky in which he was found guilty of tax evasion.

"The arrest and subsequent death in custody of Sergei Magnitsky represent a well-

documented and significant case of disrespect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia," the European Parliament said in a resolution.

"[They] have cast doubt on the independence and impartiality of its judicial institutions, and serve as a reminder of the many documented shortcomings in respect for the rule of law in Russia," it said.

Tensions between Russia and the West have risen since Moscow's recent annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula, leading the EU to impose sanctions on some Russian officials.

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