

Khodorkovsky Says 'No Politics' Deal Made With Putin

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Russian former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky during the "Ukraine-Russia: the Dialogue" congress in Kiev, Ukraine.

Former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky has said his surprise release from prison last December was facilitated by an agreement made with President Vladimir Putin to stay away from politics, but added that the deal expires in August.

When asked about his abstention from political life since his surprise presidential pardon last year, Khodorkovsky said he was upholding a deal that was made a condition of his release, according to [an interview posted on the blog](#) of French author Bernard-Henri Levy, who met with Khodorkovsky in Paris.

"Yes, it's true that I had a deal with Putin," said the former tycoon, who left Russia mere hours after his release from prison.

"But the deal expires in August," Khodorkovsky said in comments posted on Levy's blog. "Why in August? Because that's the time when he would have had to free me anyway. So my obligation to stay away from politics and occupy myself only with my children is only in effect for the duration of my preliminary release."

While shying away from actively engaging in politics, Khodorkovsky, who now lives in Switzerland, recently traveled to Ukraine where he told a conference that Putin's interference in Ukraine was driven by a "personal grudge" against protesters who toppled Ukraine's previous, Moscow-backed administration.

Once Russia's richest man, Khodorkovsky was imprisoned for 10 years on fraud and tax evasion convictions, in what many saw as a politically motivated case against one of Kremlin's most vocal and powerful critics.

Putin caught many by surprise when he announced in December that he was pardoning Khodorkovsky in comments made to reporters after the end of an hours-long annual presidential press conference.

While some have suggested that the pardon may have been an attempt to improve Russia's image abroad ahead of the Sochi Winter Olympics, Khodorkovsky said in a January interview that Putin was instead trying to reassert his authority among recalcitrant members of the Kremlin inner circle.

See also:

[Khodorkovsky to Be Pardoned, Putin Says](#)

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