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## **Russia must overturn unfair conviction of businessman**

Amnesty International is calling on the Moscow courts to overturn today's conviction of prominent businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky for money-laundering, on the grounds that his trial was unfair and appeared politically motivated.

"The Russian authorities' consistent disregard for due process in this trial only strengthens the impression that this second round of convictions has been politically motivated" said Nicola Duckworth, Amnesty International's Director for Europe and Central Asia.

Mikhail Khodorkovsky became one of Russia's richest and most powerful businessmen after acquiring former Soviet state industries in the 1990s, including the oil company YUKOS. He was arrested in 2003, and has now faced two trials with his former business associate Platon Lebedev – the first for tax evasion and fraud, and the second for embezzlement and money laundering.

Defence lawyers have been unable to cross-examine witnesses, and defence witnesses have been prevented from taking the stand.

Authorities have pressured and harassed former colleagues to testify for the prosecution.

Other breaches of legal process have included the failure of the court to order the prosecution to disclose information, and irregularities in the early stages of the investigation that hindered the rights of the accused to prepare their defence.

"All evidence points to a pattern of political motives and interference having obstructed justice in this case. The Moscow City Court must overturn this unfair conviction, to restore faith in the independence of Russia's legal system" said Nicola Duckworth.

Numerous procedural violations and widespread allegations of political motivations also marred Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev's first trial. The European Court of Human Rights is considering allegations that their first trial was politically motivated, and ruled on 25 October 2007 that repeated irregularities in the pre-trial detention of Platon Lebedev in the run up to his first trial violated his rights.