



# MIKHAIL KHODORKOVSKY AND OPEN RUSSIA

**BRIEFING PAPER**



## Mikhail Khodorkovsky

Mikhail Khodorkovsky is the founder of the Open Russia movement. A successful businessman, Khodorkovsky was head of YUKOS, one of the world's largest oil producers, where he established international management codes of practice, and substantially increased production.

A pioneering philanthropist, he established the Open Russia Foundation in 2001 with the aim of building and strengthening civil society in Russia.

An early supporter of democratic change, at a televised meeting with President Putin in early 2003, he criticised endemic corruption. Later that same year he was arrested, and jailed on charges of tax evasion and fraud, charges, which he denied and vigorously defended. Khodorkovsky was sentenced to fourteen years in prison. He was declared a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International; and finally released in December 2013.

In 2014, the Hague Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled that the Russian Government had violated international law by taking YUKOS from its shareholders, for political purposes, described as a *“full assault on Yukos and its beneficial owners in order to bankrupt Yukos and appropriate its assets while, at the same time, removing Mr. Khodorkovsky from the political arena.”*

Today, Khodorkovsky advocates an alternative vision for his country: a strong and just state, committed to observing human rights, free and fair elections, and the rule of law.

To find out more about Mikhail Khodorkovsky please visit [khodorkovsky.com](http://khodorkovsky.com)



*Open Russia* in its current form aims to connect and unite Russian citizens who seek a state governed by the rule of law, with a strong civil society, regular free and fair elections, and the promotion of European democratic values.

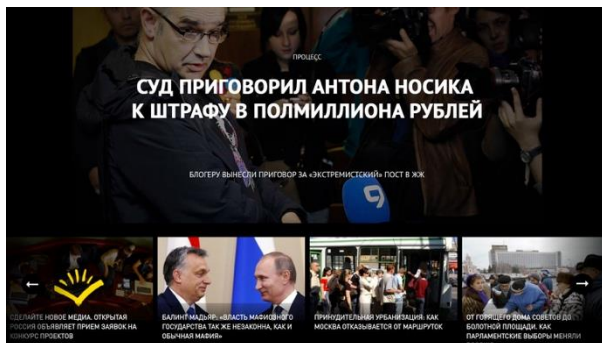
Khodorkovsky has described *Open Russia* as a “horizontal alliance,” explaining: *“What is needed now for effective resistance is not a party with yet another ‘vertical’ structure, eager to fight for power, but a ‘horizontal’ alliance of the vast number of ‘small civic groups’ that form the underlying fabric of civil society and that solve their own concrete problems locally.”*

*Open Russia* seeks to build a solid, sustainable foundation for democratic governance when change eventually, and inevitably, comes to Russia. Khodorkovsky explains: *“I’m working to ensure that, when everything collapses, Russia has political forces created with society’s understanding and recognition that will keep the country from making the same mistakes all over again. The goal is to show people both in and outside of Russia that there is another model of existence in our country, open to the world, not isolationist. And we need political forces that will act with a clear plan, putting the country on a healthy, democratic track of development, guided by the rule of law, the separation of powers, and fair elections.”*



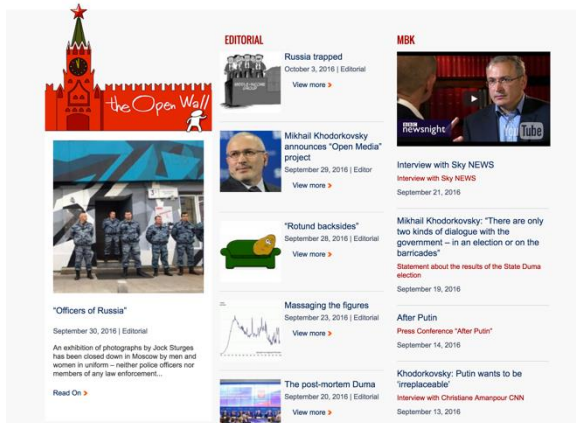
Open Russia's current projects include:

**A human rights project:** in particular supporting, and providing legal assistance to, political prisoners. A joint project between Khodorkovsky and Alexei Navalny also assists families of political prisoners, who find it difficult to travel the long distances to remote camps and colonies.



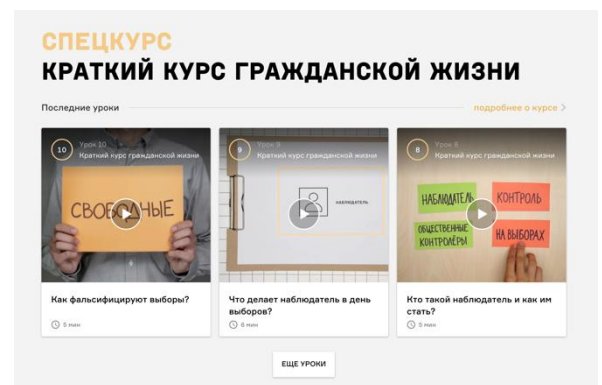
A Russian-language online media project [OpenRussia.org](http://OpenRussia.org), which publishes daily, and promotes the values and aims of Khodorkovsky and the Open Russia movement.

The recently announced **Open Media** project, aimed at supporting start-ups in the field of investigative journalism. Journalists and activists wishing to set up their own media project will be able to apply for financial support.



An English-language online media project, including Khodorkovsky's [website](http://www.openwall.org), with its regular **Open Wall** column, giving an insider's look at what is happening in Russia; and social media platforms.

**Open Russia University**, an online educational humanities project, taught in Russian by leading academics, scientists, writers and economists, and open to all Russian speakers, of any age, wherever they may be. The aim of the Open Russia University is to look into Russia's past, so as to better understand its future, and how best to develop and manage that future.



## Putin's Outlaw State, MH17 Propaganda, and the Case of Putin's Millionaire Friend

September 26-October 2



This week, in the Western media highlights, The New York Times argues that under Vladimir Putin's rule Russia is rapidly turning into an outlaw nation.

### THE RUNDOWN: MEDIA MISTAKES

Reincarnation of the KGB, Putin's Ideology Hero, and Russia's Liberal Utopia

September 19-25

In this week's Western media highlights, Andrei Soldatov explores in Foreign Policy the implications of the potential revival of the Ministry of State Security in Russia, which he calls a "reincarnation of the KGB." Timothy Snyder delves into Russia's political history and analyzes the influence that one particular figure—philosopher Ivan Ilyin—has gained over Putin and the rest of the Kremlin elite. Meanwhile, in the Russian media, experts have been discussing Russia's recent parliamentary elections and the flaws in Russian liberal thinking.

### THE RUNDOWN: EVENT BRIEFINGS

Experts: The U.S. Should Not Promote Democracy in Russia Because This

### NUMBERS OF THE WEEK

On September 18, Russia held parliamentary elections to the country's 7th State Duma. The turnout was low—47.8 percent across the country—well below record in Moscow, Moscow region and St. Petersburg—slightly over 30 percent. Only four parties were elected to the new Duma according to the party lists: United Russia (54.18 percent), Communist Party (13.25 percent), Liberal Democratic Party (13.16 percent) and Just Russia (5.21 percent). Non-parliamentary liberal parties Yabloko and PARNAS were unable to pass the 5 percent electoral threshold, receiving 1.91 percent and 0.7 percent of the vote respectively.

### TRENDING

1. The "Bromans" between Trump and Putin, a Cyber Showdown, and How the American Media is Electing Putin

The *Institute of Modern Russia*, a think-tank working on the development of post-Putin reform programmes.



**Open Russia Club** – a London hub for Russian cultural activity, social and political discussion.



**Open Elections**, a capacity building project, which actively promotes and supports political activists running at a municipal, regional and presidential level.

During the 2016 Duma election campaign, *Open Russia* supported a number of candidates (19 in all) campaigning on a democratic ticket. Support was given to those candidates that share the aim of the *Open Russia* movement, who are serious about the development of their region, and willing to engage in discussion about the issues affecting the country on a federal level.

To find out more about our Duma election campaign, please read our **Campaign Summary**

The **"After Putin"** crowd-funded project, which will introduce new political faces – potential candidates for the post of president of Russia – to the Russian public, in advance of the presidential election, scheduled for 2018.

