

[Translation from Russian; original article at:

<https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2016/10/18/70221-uzhe-13-let-ya-ne-mogu-dazhe-obnyat-svoego-syna>; all bracketed text by translator”

October 18, 2016

“I haven’t been able to even hug my son for 13 years”

Alla Nikolayevna Pichugina’s open letter to the Russian Federation President

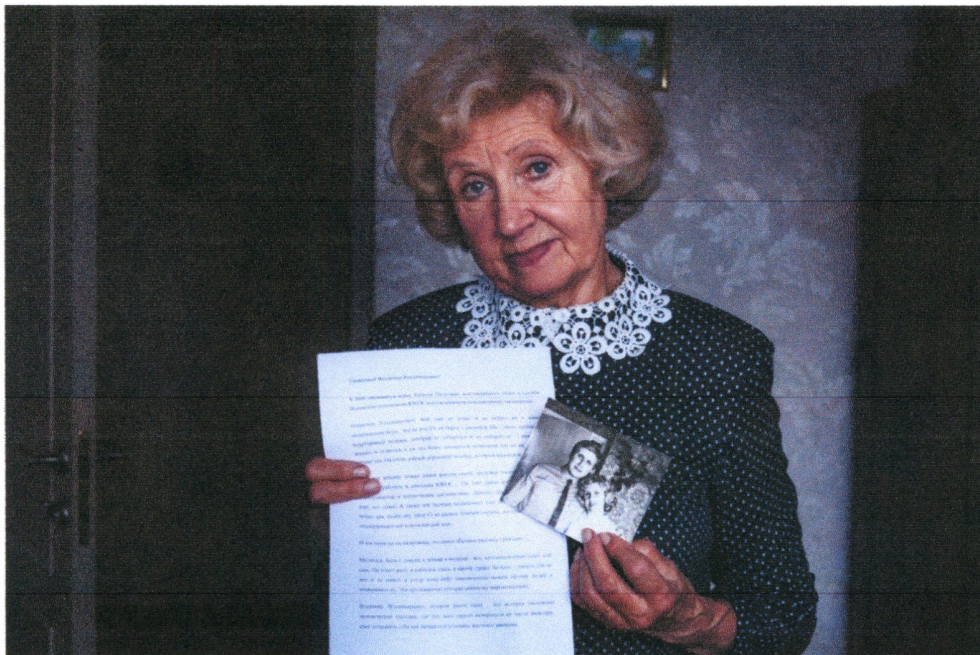


Photo: Victoria Odissonova/*Novaya Gazeta*

Alla Pichugina with a letter to Vladimir Putin and a photo with her son.

This past summer, former Yukos security chief [sic¹] Alexei Pichugin was transported to Moscow from Sol-Iletzk’s Black Dolphin prison camp. The investigators once again needed statements in the case against Xodorkovsky, revived *posthaste* by the Investigative Committee. Here at the editorial offices, we immediately remembered Alla Nikolayevna, thinking she’d now get to see her son more often – after all, he’s here, in Moscow, at Lefortovo [jail], right around the

¹ Translator note: Pichugin headed a department within the Yukos Security Division, he did not head the Security Division – it was headed by Mr. Shestopalov.

corner, not 1,200 km [~750 miles] away... But this mother wasn't allowed to visit her son even once in the months that Pichugin's been in Moscow.

Those sentenced to life in prison are allowed family visitation just twice a year, and even those visits are short – 4 hours each, through glass, using a telephone receiver, with strangers right there...

It turned out that the mother and son have already used up their official[ly allotted] through-the-glass/over-the-receiver hours for the year in Sol-Iletzk, so it's pointless to expect anything [like a chance to visit] here in Moscow, at Lefortovo.

We called Alla Nikolayevna and asked for an interview. She thought about it and refused, but she did ask us to publish her letter to President Vladimir Putin – that's all she wants to say today.

Novaya Gazeta

Alla Pichugina's letter to President Vladimir Putin

Dear Vladimir Vladimirovich!

Writing to you is the mom of Alexei Pichugin who headed a department of the Yukos Security Division and who was sentenced to life in prison.

Vladimir Vladimirovich, my son has never played and is not playing any political games. That's not his [thing]. He is not [trying to] fight the system. He is a very honest and non-public person who has never planned and is not planning to fight anyone or to sue anyone, and he's certainly not planning to get involved in politics. He holds no grudges against anyone. He is a very kind, religious person who prays for everyone...

My son is guilty of a single item on his résumé – he happened to work at Yukos... He has already proved everything [sic] long ago with his decency and his human dignity. First of all, he proved it to himself, and he proved it to us, his family. And he proved it to thousands of people² we don't know (if only you knew how many people write to him!) from various corners of the country, [people] who support him and me with letters every day.

And these people are not biased, these are regular rank-and-file citizens...

² Translator note: there is a wrong ending in Russian in the word "people" due to either a typo or wrong declension.

To pray, to be with his family, his children and his grandchildren – that's all my son unbearably [sic] wants. He wants to live and work here, in our country. Nothing else. He could not and cannot bear false witness against people and give false testimony against people in order to please anyone. That goes against his Christian world view.

Vladimir Vladimirovich, my son's story is a story of true human tragedy, where a person who was simply crossed off the list of the living was able to preserve himself as an individual in conditions of stiff pressure.

Vladimir Vladimirovich, I am 77 years old. My son is 54. He is not very well. I am growing weaker. And in over 13 years I haven't been able to even put my hand on my son's shoulder, let alone hug him, and neither can his children. Because we are not allowed visitation – just conversation through glass, twice a year. His two grandchildren have only seen him in old photographs taken before his arrest. These are conditions to which my son was swiftly sentenced with no evidence, with fraudulent facts and testimony, with incredible pressure on members of the jury in the first case.

I am definitely not trying to pull on your heartstrings. It's just that I am at the end of desperation [sic]. Even my son's request for pardon, addressed to you in accordance with the Constitution, did not reach you... This was even officially confirmed by your esteemed press secretary. Apparently, even without reading the paper, the Orenburg Region Governor, instead of you, denied Alexei's pardon with one stroke of a pen. I was shocked that prisoners' pardon requests do not reach you as guarantor of the Constitution, which provides that only the president decides on the issue of pardon.

Vladimir Vladimirovich, maybe I am naïve, but all these years I have hoped, and for some reason continue to hope for your mercifulness and your ability to sort everything out objectively, casting aside the political component, and to show compassion. Please understand me as a mom.

His release can't impinge on anyone [sic]. He's long overdue at home, with his family. Please pardon my son!

With great respect and hope,

Alla Nikolayevna Pichugina