

## Recommended Read: *Freezing Order* by Bill Browder

This book is more gripping than any John Grisham or James Patterson crime novel, with the slight difference, everything in this book is true, and it's happening right now.

Bill Browder the CEO of the London based Hedge Fund, Hermitage Capital was once the largest foreign investor in Russia. When Browder began to expose Russia's corporate corruption, he was declared a threat to national security and wasn't allowed back into the country.

Following his banishment, 50 officers from the Interior Ministry of Russia raided Browder's Moscow office. The officers seized control of three Hermitage holding companies and used them to steal \$230 million of taxes. Browder's lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, was investigating the matter when he was arrested, detained, and tortured for 358 days and later died.

After Magnitsky's devastating death, Browder has dedicated most of his life to lobbying for the adoption of the Global Magnitsky Act around the world. The law initially barred 18 Russian officials thought to be involved in Magnitsky's mistreatment and death from entering the US or using its banking system. It also banned any assets these individuals had in the US. From 2016, Congress voted to expand it into the Global Magnitsky Act, which allowed for sanctions against human rights abusers in other parts of the world too.

*Freezing Order*, the second book after *Red Notice*, takes us through Browder's fight for the Magnitsky Act to be implemented across the world, all whilst playing a real life game of cat and mouse with Putin. A combination of dogged investigation, leaked documents, partnerships with journalists and co-operation with law enforcement agencies has led to some notable victories for Browder and certainly makes for a very gripping (and utterly shocking) read.

The tragedy of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022 has brought to light many ESG investing issues. Predominately how many asset managers claim lip service to sustainable and ethical investing but that's where it ends. Many ESG complying asset managers got their fingers burnt recently with Russian investments. It makes little sense to focus on a company's ESG policy and ignore the policies of the government. If a countries government principles are poor, it doesn't really matter what governance is like at a company level.

Bill Browder continues to highlight the autocratic criminal regime which is Putin's Russia and how Putin and his cronies will unabashedly ignore any international law. Those who stand in their way mysteriously fall off roofs, get poisoned or go missing. Also highlighted, and equally concerning in this book is how many powerful politicians and global firms in the West are enthusiastic enablers of Putin.

Bill Browder is tenacious and incredibly brave in his fight for the Magnitsky Act to be implemented across the world and we will continue to watch his unrelenting endeavours and hope that he succeeds.

It should be mandatory that everyone, especially those in investment management read this book.

