

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to urge you to address the arrest and detention of falsely accused U.S. citizens in Russia when you meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin on June 16. Over the past three years, the Russian Federation has arrested, detained, and convicted two American citizens, Paul Whelan and Trevor Reed, on legally dubious and politically motivated charges. These political arrests are unacceptable and fly in the face of international legal standards.

Paul Whelan was arrested in December 2018 and falsely charged with espionage. Throughout Mr. Whelan's detention, the Russian government repeatedly violated his rights, denied him proper medical care, and refused to provide any evidence to substantiate the charges against him. He was held in pre-trial detention for over 18 months in the notorious Lefortovo prison. Then Mr. Whelan's trial was held behind closed doors and his defense was prohibited from calling witnesses. Mr. Whelan now serves a 16-year sentence of hard labor in the World War I-era IK-17 gulag. June 16 will mark the 900th day of Mr. Whelan's unjust detention.

Trevor Reed was arrested following an altercation with Moscow police in 2019 and accused of endangering the lives of the police officers. During his trial, Mr. Reed's defense lawyers were repeatedly denied access to additional video evidence that would have proved his innocence. The case presented against Mr. Reed was so ridiculous it evoked laughter throughout the courtroom including the judge. U.S. Ambassador John Sullivan called his trial a "theater of the absurd" and "justice was not even considered" in the case. Mr. Reed was sentenced to nine years in prison camp. The U.S. Embassy in Russia recently issued a statement expressing concern for the health of Mr. Reed, who was recently diagnosed with COVID-19, and who has been cut off from communication with his parents and diplomats for over two weeks. We are deeply concerned for the health of Mr. Reed and while we applaud the State Department's responsiveness, mere statements are not enough.

As members of Congress, we have called on the Government of the Russian Federation to immediately release Mr. Whelan and Mr. Reed. Last Congress, the House of Representatives passed H.Res.552 calling for the release of Paul Whelan and H.Res.1115 calling for the release of Trevor Reed with overwhelming bipartisan support. We are pursuing similar resolutions in the 117th Congress. The Senate has also introduced bipartisan resolutions, S.Res.165 calling for the release of Paul Whelan and S.Res.67 calling for the release of Trevor Reed.

We commend the steps you and Secretary Blinken have taken to secure the release of Mr. Whelan and Mr. Reed and urge you to redouble your commitments to stand up for human rights, due process, and dignity of Americans abroad. We also urge you to intensify wherever possible your engagement with President Putin to make clear that politically motivated arrests and the detention of U.S. citizens are unacceptable. We must continue to urge him to release all prisoners unjustly imprisoned in Russia.

We thank you for your efforts and stand ready to work with you to secure the release of Mr. Whelan and Mr. Reed.

Sincerely,



Haley Stevens
Member of Congress



August Pfluger
Member of Congress



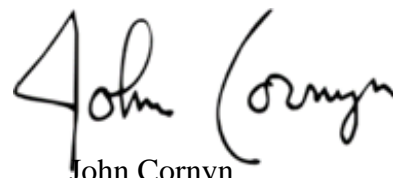
Tim Walberg
Member of Congress



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Gary Peters
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator

Kevin McCarthy
House Republican Leader

Michael T. McCaul
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Andy Levin
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Brian Fitzpatrick
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Trent Kelly
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Peter Meijer
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Dan Crenshaw
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Brenda L. Lawrence
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Debbie Dingell
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William R. Keating
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Andrew R. Garbarino
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Van Taylor
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Ronny L. Jackson
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Brian Babin, D.D.S.
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Kevin Brady
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Young Kim
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Lance Gooden
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Carol D. Miller
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Colin Allred
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Joe Wilson
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro
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Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress

Ted Budd
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Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
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Randy K. Weber
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Beth Van Duyne
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John Moolenaar
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Claudia Tenney
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Tony Gonzales
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Bill Huizenga
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Jack Bergman
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Lisa McClain
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Henry Cuellar
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Kaiali'i Kahele
Member of Congress