

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Statement on the Release of Three United States Citizens and One Permanent Resident From Detention in Russia

August 1, 2024

Today three American citizens and one American green-card holder who were unjustly imprisoned in Russia are finally coming home: Paul Whelan, Evan Gershkovich, Alsu Kurmasheva, and Vladimir Kara-Murza.

The deal that secured their freedom was a feat of diplomacy. All told, we've negotiated the release of 16 people from Russia, including 5 Germans and 7 Russian citizens who were political prisoners in their own country. Some of these women and men have been unjustly held for years. All have endured unimaginable suffering and uncertainty. Today their agony is over.

I am grateful to our allies who stood with us throughout tough, complex negotiations to achieve this outcome, including Germany, Poland, Slovenia, Norway, and Turkey. This is a powerful example of why it's vital to have friends in this world whom you can trust and depend upon. Our alliances make Americans safer.

And let me be clear: I will not stop working until every American wrongfully detained or held hostage around the world is reunited with their family. My administration has now brought home over 70 such Americans, many of whom were in captivity since before I took office. Still, too many families are suffering and separated from their loved ones, and I have no higher priority as President than bringing those Americans home.

Today we celebrate the return of Paul, Evan, Alsu, and Vladimir and rejoice with their families. We remember all those still wrongfully detained or held hostage around the world and reaffirm our pledge to their families: We see you. We are with you. And we will never stop working to bring your loved ones home where they belong.

NOTE: The statement referred to Paul N. Whelan, a U.S. citizen who was arrested and held on espionage charges by Russian security services in Moscow, Russia, on December 28, 2018; Evan Gershkovich, a Wall Street Journal reporter who was arrested by Russian authorities on March 29, 2023; Alsu Kurmasheva, a journalist with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Tatar-Bashkir Service who was detained in Kazan, Russia, on October 18, 2023; and Vladimir Kara-Murza, a British-Russian journalist and contributor to the Washington Post who was arrested by Russian authorities in April 2022 on charges of spreading false information about the armed forces.

Categories: Statements by the President : Release of U.S. citizens and permanent resident from detention in Russia.

Names: Gershkovich, Evan; Kara-Murza, Vladimir; Kurmasheva, Alsu; Whelan, Paul N.

Subjects: Hostages and U.S. nationals detained overseas, repatriation efforts; Russia, human rights issues; Russia, multilateral prisoner exchange; Russia, release of U.S. citizens and permanent resident; U.S. diplomatic efforts, expansion.

DCPD Number: DCPD202400666.