

January 10, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Janet Yellen
Secretary of the Treasury
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Blinken and Secretary Yellen:

Next week, the Biden administration faces a statutory deadline to respond to a [letter from Senators Jim Risch and Bob Menendez](#) requesting that the administration determine whether it will impose Global Magnitsky sanctions against those involved in the arbitrary detention of Russian activist, political opposition leader, journalist, and historian Vladimir Kara-Murza. We urge you to impose Magnitsky sanctions against Russian officials known to be involved in Kara-Murza's ongoing detention before the January 20 deadline.

Vladimir Kara-Murza has long been a vocal critic of Vladimir Putin's corrupt and abusive regime and a key advocate for the use of targeted sanctions to promote accountability for human rights abuses and corruption, including through the Global Magnitsky Act. As has been the case with other critics of the Kremlin, Kara-Murza has been targeted for his advocacy. In 2015 and 2017, Kara-Murza was [poisoned and left in a coma](#) in attacks that [resembled other assassination attempts](#) on Russian opposition figures, [including Alexey Navalny](#). Kara-Murza has been arbitrarily imprisoned by Russian authorities [since April 2022](#), when he was pretextually arrested [for allegedly disobeying the police](#). The Russian government has [repeatedly extended](#) his pretrial detention and brought new charges against him, including spreading “deliberately false information” about the Russian Armed Forces, involvement with an [“undesirable” foreign organization](#), and [“high treason,”](#) for which he could face 20 years in prison if convicted.

His detention is arbitrary under [international law](#) and as such, is sanctionable as a “flagrant denial” of his right to liberty and security of person under U.S. law. The charges against him make clear that his detention is solely based on his public statements of his political opinion and exercise of fundamental rights to freedom of expression and assembly. Moreover, throughout his detention, Kara-Murza has been denied the right to a fair trial, as he has been denied the right to the presumption of innocence, the right to an independent and impartial judge, the right to a public hearing, and the right to the effective preparation of his defense, among other violations. The procedural aspects of the proceedings have been flawed throughout, and the criminal charges against him are baseless.

Based on these facts, Senators Risch and Menendez wrote a [letter](#) to President Biden on September 22, 2022, urging him to determine whether Kara-Murza’s ongoing arbitrary imprisonment constitutes a gross violation of human rights and if so, whether sanctions will be imposed on those responsible. Under the [Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act](#), following receipt of such a request from the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the President has 120 days to determine whether a foreign person has engaged in “gross violation[s] of internationally recognized human rights” against individuals who “expose illegal activity carried out by government officials” or “obtain, exercise, defend, or promote

internationally recognized human rights and freedoms.” The President’s response must include a report stating whether the President will impose sanctions. The 120-day period on the request from Senators Risch and Menendez expires on January 20.

Given your roles administering the Global Magnitsky sanctions program, we are writing to emphasize that the criteria for such sanctions are clearly satisfied. In October 2022, Human Rights First [submitted a formal recommendation](#) to the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of the Treasury recommending Magnitsky sanctions and other targeted measures against 13 Russians involved in the arbitrary detention, harassment, and attempted murder of Kara-Murza. In November, [the Canadian government used its own targeted sanctions program](#) against Russian individuals involved in Kara-Murza’s arbitrary detention and poisonings.

Imposing targeted U.S. sanctions would further demonstrate to Russian authorities that foreign governments are focused on Kara-Murza’s situation and that they will not tolerate state violence against him, nor the Kremlin’s broader efforts to silence dissent. Given the Russian government’s previous attempts on his life and the recent [extension](#) of his pre-trial detention until February 12th, the administration must act swiftly. Doing so would demonstrate solidarity with Kara-Murza and others taking the risk of speaking out against Putin’s war in Ukraine and his repression of dissidents within Russia.

The United States has an opportunity to show its support by acting on the calls for sanctions from civil society and leading members of Congress. We therefore urge the Biden administration to impose Magnitsky sanctions on the individuals responsible for Kara-Murza’s persecution before January 20.

Sincerely,

1. Astraea
2. Free Russia Foundation
3. Human Rights First
4. Human Rights Foundation
5. Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights
6. REDRESS
7. The McCain Institute for International Leadership