

July 30, 2022

Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We are the leaders of three human rights organizations with which Vladimir Kara-Murza serves, or has recently served, in roles ranging from senior advisor to vice-president. Ever since his absurd April 11 arrest in Moscow for speaking the truth about the Russian government's brutality in Ukraine, we have spoken out against the injustice of Vladimir's arbitrary detention, and we have appreciated the U.S. government's calls for Russian authorities to release him.

To ensure that Vladimir receives the full extent of the diplomatic support to which he may be entitled, we are writing to respectfully urge you to determine that he is a "U.S. national" who has been "unlawfully or wrongfully detained abroad" as defined under the Robert Levinson Act and President Biden's July 19 executive order.

The charges against Vladimir are clearly spurious and amount to retaliation for his exercise of basic political rights. Your spokesperson correctly [described](#) Vladimir's arrest as part of the Russian government's broader crackdown on those exercising their rights. Amnesty International has [affirmed](#) that Vladimir is a "prisoner of conscience" and that the article of the Russian criminal code under which he has been charged contains "intentionally broad and vague definitions" and "violates the right to freedom of expression...guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Russian Constitution." [Both houses](#) of the U.S. Congress have condemned Vladimir's "unjust detention" in bipartisan resolutions, and the *Washington Post* editorial board [called](#) the proceedings against him a "judicial charade." The additional criminal charges that Russian authorities are now reportedly [pursuing](#) for Vladimir's association with "undesirable organizations" – that is, human rights advocates – are no different.

As you know, the Levinson Act and the July 19 executive order [include](#) "lawful permanent resident alien[s] with significant ties to the United States" among those "U.S. nationals" whose wrongful detention abroad is of direct concern to the U.S. government. Vladimir's ties to the United States easily meet this requirement, on both a personal and professional level. He has held a green card for several years. He is married to a U.S. citizen, and their three children are also U.S. citizens. Through the course of Vladimir's work, he has established deep professional ties with a wide range of U.S. advocates, journalists, organizations, and officials, including politicians of all partisan and ideological stripes.

We know that Vladimir is not alone in being unjustly imprisoned by the Russian government, even among U.S. citizens and residents. We know, too, that official U.S. advocacy is no guarantee an authoritarian government will relent in its hostage-taking. But we are deeply concerned that Vladimir faces unique dangers, because the same authorities holding him in

custody are those who have twice sought to murder him with poison. We also understand that Ambassador Roger Carstens – who leads U.S. diplomatic efforts on these matters as the special presidential envoy for hostage affairs – cannot involve himself in a particular case absent the kind of determination we are seeking.

Vladimir’s continued detention puts his life at grave risk, and his immediate release would be a tremendous relief to his family, his fellow advocates in Russia and abroad, and those whom he has reached through Russia’s now-silenced independent news outlets and the pages of the *Washington Post*. We will continue directly calling on the Russian government to release Vladimir and other political prisoners, and we know you will do so as well. To that end, we encourage you to take this additional step to ensure that Vladimir benefits from the status and the more active advocacy that may be available to him under the Levinson Act.

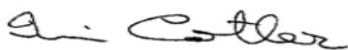
Sincerely,



Natalia Arno
President
Free Russia Foundation



Michael Breen
President and CEO
Human Rights First



Hon. Professor Irwin Cotler, P.C., O.C., O.Q., Ad.E.
Founder and Chair
Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights

CC:

Ambassador Victoria Nuland, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Karen Donfried, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs
Ambassador Roger Carstens, Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs
Robert Berschinski, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Democracy and Human Rights, National Security Council