

April 8, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Last month I had the opportunity to visit with Russian opposition lawmaker named Dmitry Gudkov, who was in the United States in an effort to improve relations between our countries. During our visit we discussed the Russian Government's recent ban on U.S. adoptions, among other important matters. When he returned to Russia, Mr. Gudkov was expelled from his party and accused of treason for discussing these matters with American lawmakers.

This behavior by the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin fits into a broader pattern of blatant intimidation and authoritarianism that has wrecked most of Russia's fledgling political and civic institutions in recent years. It is virtually impossible to operate an independent business, political party, or charitable organization in Russia today without harassment, imprisonment, or even physical injury by Russian authorities. In short, Russia has effectively turned into a repressive regime.

I'm deeply concerned about Russia's further slide into authoritarianism and believe that the United States should provide international leadership that both calls attention to this behavior and takes steps to address it. That is why I supported, along with many of my colleagues in the Senate, legislation to give the administration the tools it needs to sanction Russian human rights violators. That legislation, known as the Sergei Magnitsky Act, is now law.

Unfortunately, little in our current Russia policy appears to be achieving results. While Russia's cooperation on Iran sanctions seems to have improved marginally, Russia continues to occupy significant portions of the Republic of Georgia, aid and abet the illegitimate Assad regime's civilian slaughter in Syria, and use its energy supplies to politically blackmail our European partners. I believe these actions, combined with Russia's dismal record on human rights and its recent use of thousands of orphans as geopolitical pawns, demonstrate the need for stronger American leadership.

The administration should raise the profile of human rights and political freedoms as serious bilateral challenges in our relationship with Russia. At the very least, the State Department

should carefully monitor and respond to political intimidation of the kind that Mr. Gudkov was subjected to when he returned from the United States.

Additionally, the administration should work with international bodies such as the European Court on Human Rights and the European Commissioner on Human Rights to press for stricter rules regarding protections for the international adoption process. The Russian Government's willingness to use orphaned children as political pawns is outrageous and it is my hope that this administration will use its offices both publicly and privately to call attention to this problem.

I believe we share the view that Russia's success as a responsible stakeholder in the international community is both desirable and dependent on Russia's coming into alignment with important international laws and norms. Thank you for your attention to these important challenges.

Sincere regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roy Blunt", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Roy Blunt
United States Senator

Cc: John Kerry, Secretary of State