Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 28, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

RE: U.S. Nationals Detained by the Russian Federation

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We write to express our grave concern for the U.S. nationals detained by the Russian Federation under circumstances that raise serious questions about their safety and wellbeing, due process, and violations to international norms. In particular, we write with concern for U.S. nationals who have been detained for extended periods and are recognized by the Department of State as "cases of concern" but who have not yet been designated as wrongfully detained under the *Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act* ("Levinson Act") by the Department, a reality which deeply undermines the negotiating position of the United States in securing their safe and rightful return home, perpetuating their suffering under an unjust regime.

We are grateful that Stephen Hubbard was released from Russian custody after more than 1,663 days in prison. Mr. Hubbard was the only American in Russia designated wrongfully detained under the *Levinson Act* prior to his release. We also recognize and appreciate the continued efforts by the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (SPEHA), the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, and others in the administration who continuously engage on these critical cases and with the families of those wrongfully held by the Russian government, as well as the efforts of the Department of State to engage with Congress on constituent cases. In addition to Stephen Hubbard, we join the Gilman family in their relief following the August 2026 release of Robert Gilman after 1,666 days wrongfully detained in Russia and after horrific reports on his health and the conditions of his imprisonment. Notably, when Robert was released near death, the Russian government commented about not having prioritized him because he had not been designated as unlawfully detained by the U.S.

Today, at least five U.S. nationals remain in these same conditions without designation. The continued detention of Americans in Russia underscores the need for sustained engagement and a renewed urgency to obtain their release, including in independent and direct negotiations with the Russian government separate from broader, ongoing negotiations on Russia's war against Ukraine. Given the stalled status of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, we are deeply concerned that tying the fate of these Americans and their families to broader issues in the U.S.-Russia relationship and deferring their designation as wrongful detainees undoubtedly prolongs their hardship.

Families of detainees endure significant emotional and financial hardship while awaiting progress on the release of their loved ones. Several of our offices have received troubling reports from family and community members regarding the conditions of detention of their loved ones and the perpetual nature of their detention. Many detainees have remained in Russian custody for years with no clear pathway

for their release or return to the United States. As time passes, the physical, emotional, and psychological toll on both the detainees and their families continues to mount. The cases of detained U.S. nationals in Russia, include, but are not limited to, many of our constituents. As of October 21, 2026, these individuals have been held in Russian custody for the following days:

- Andre Khachatoorian - 1,758 days
- David Barnes - 1,742 days
- Olga Jezler - 1,577 days
- Alexsandr Antonov - 594 days
- Chuck Zimmerman - 490 days

All of these individuals have deteriorating medical situations that are exacerbated, or are not being addressed, by the Russian prison system. Chuck Zimmerman is a U.S. Navy veteran kidnapped from international waters. He is in critical condition, literally starving to death due to an untreated critical gastrointestinal issue. Aleksandr Anotonov was beaten in a Russian prison for being American. He is now barely surviving with an untreated traumatic brain injury. Olga Jezler is a vibrant 36-year-old woman, languishing from a treatable medical condition that could put her at risk of losing her ability to have children, or worse. Andre Khachatoorian is fighting a worsening autoimmune disease with no access to proper medication. David Barnes is suffering debilitating dental issues, losing six teeth and has needed, and been denied, critical surgery while in prison.

Post-release reports that Robert Gilman's medical situation was within 1-2 days of causing his death underscore our concern that action is warranted before a situation becomes potentially irreversible.

We are united in the belief that the safe return of U.S. nationals detained abroad must remain a priority of the United States government. We are deeply concerned that the authorities outlined in the Levinson Act to designate these U.S. nationals detained by the Russian Federation as wrongful detainees are not being fully leveraged. Using this invaluable legislation to its fullest extent, as Congress intended, would maximize U.S. government coordination and advance negotiations to ensure their swift release. The designation is also key for providing needed resources to the families as they advocate for their loved ones, while also ensuring full support to released detainees upon their return to the U.S.

We urge the administration to continue employing all diplomatic, economic, and strategic tools available to secure the release of these detained U.S. nationals, steadfastly support their families throughout this process, and conduct these negotiations regardless of a Russia-Ukraine peace process or other issues of bilateral concern. Specifically, we ask that this include:

1. Continuing to demand and ensure adequate consular access to all U.S. nationals held in Russian detention.
2. Expediting the consideration and employment of the "wrongful detention" designation as intended under the Levinson Act and subsequent legislation that has expanded the Levinson Act, including continued communication with Congress on the criteria and deliberations of such designations.

3. A plan and path forward to secure the release of U.S. nationals currently detained in the Russian Federation outside of negotiations related to Russia' s invasion of Ukraine or broader issues in the U.S.-Russia bilateral relationship.
4. Consideration of the use of the State Sponsor of Wrongful Detention designation that has already been used on other repeat offender nations, including Iran and Afghanistan.

We thank you for your continued engagement with Congress on these and other critical cases. We look forward to your response and continued cooperation in support of U.S. nationals detained abroad and their families here at home.

Sincerely,

George Latimer
Member of Congress

Laura Friedman
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress