

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES AFFAIRES  
ÉTRANGÈRES ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT  
INTERNATIONAL

Ottawa, June 17, 2019

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Freeland,

On 10 June 2019, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development held a special meeting on the situation of political and religious prisoners, indigenous minorities and the LGBTI community in Russia. During the meeting, the Committee heard from the following expert witnesses: Vladimir Kara-Murza, Chairman of the Boris Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom; the Honourable Irwin Cotler, Founding Chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights; Jared Genser, Managing Partner of Perseus Strategies; and Natalia Arno, President of the Free Russia Foundation.

The focus of the witness testimony was a May 2019 report prepared by Perseus Strategies entitled *The Kremlin's Political Prisoners: Advancing a Political Agenda by Crushing Dissent*. The report addresses the situation of political prisoners in Russia and provides information on the human rights conditions faced by opposition groups, religious minorities, civil society organizations, journalists and media organizations and activists in Russia. According to the report, the Kremlin is violating the rights of Russian citizens in relation to the freedoms of expression, association, religious belief, and political participation, as well as due process, including the right to a fair trial and access to counsel.

The report offers several recommendations aimed at increasing pressure on the Kremlin to release political prisoners in Russia. Among these recommendations is a call for individual countries and multilateral institutions to investigate and potentially impose, if appropriate, targeted financial sanctions and travel bans on individuals responsible for the persecution of political prisoners in Russia.

Members of the Committee unanimously agreed to bring this report and the Committee's meeting to your attention. The transcript and video of the meeting can be found on the Committee's

[website](#). Members request that you and your officials at Global Affairs Canada consider the testimony given to our Committee as part of your ongoing review of Canadian sanctions on Russia.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'ML', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Levitt

Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development,  
House of Commons, Parliament of Canada