



THE NEWSGUILD – CWA

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April 4, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

I write to you as the president of the largest union of journalists and media workers in North America, where we represent workers from more than 200 news organizations including at The Wall Street Journal.

We are deeply concerned about the arrest of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich by Russian authorities last week. We urgently request your administration take all necessary steps to assist in securing his immediate release and to provide support to his family.

Mr. Gershkovich is a committed journalist at The Wall Street Journal and has reported exclusively on the Kremlin's war efforts, profiled Russian dissidents and covered the stories of wartime life in border towns in Russia and Ukraine.

In April, Mr. Gershkovich wrote about the Russian government's organized effort to [squash dissent](#) and discourage antiwar protests. In September he profiled a paratrooper who fought in the war and [described a poorly organized](#) war effort. In December he and his colleagues profiled the depth at which Russian President Vladimir Putin surrounded himself with advisors who told him [what he wanted to hear](#), not what was actually happening on the ground.

I appreciate your call for Russia to release Mr. Gershkovich and appreciate U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's call to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Sunday. We stand with Mr. Gershkovich's colleagues and Wall Street Journal management in denouncing the arrest and the charges against him as meritless.

Martha Waggoner
Chairperson

Jon Schleuss
President

Marian Needham
Executive Vice President

CWA|SCA Canada President: Martin O'Hanlon

Vice Presidents: Diane Mastrull, Dan Gabor, Kevin Flowers, Michael Cabanatuan, Bill Baker, Jeff Gordon

We ask that you move swiftly with Roger D. Carstens, your special envoy for hostage affairs, to designate Mr. Gershkovich as wrongfully detained so that he can qualify for more support under the Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act.

I also urge your restraint in retaliating against Russian journalists in the United States. We do not benefit from any reduction of the number of journalists covering our democracy.

We believe that a free and independent press is a cornerstone of any democratic society. Journalists are the watchdogs of democracy's flame.

As a world leader and a strong advocate for human rights, the United States has the power to influence and exert pressure on the Russian government to ensure Mr. Gershkovich's release. We ask that you use the full force of your office and the diplomatic resources at your disposal to secure his immediate release.

Furthermore, we implore you to engage with international partners and organizations to amplify this message, thereby reinforcing the importance of press freedom and the protection of journalists worldwide.

As a matter of urgency, we also request that you provide support to Mr. Gershkovich's family during this difficult time, ensuring that they receive regular updates on his situation and any assistance they may require.

We appreciate your attention to this critical issue, and we look forward to your administration's swift and decisive action in securing Mr. Gershkovich's release. Journalists play a vital role in preserving and promoting democratic values and it is our collective responsibility to stand up for their rights and safety.

Journalism is not a crime. No journalist should be arrested for doing their job.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Schleuss', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jon Schleuss
President, The NewsGuild-CWA