



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUGUST 1, 2024

**STATEMENT BY FRED RYAN,
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF THE
RONALD REAGAN PRESIDENTIAL FOUNDATION AND INSTITUTE
ON THE RELEASE OF RUSSIAN-HELD PRISONERS**

We are overjoyed at today's release of several Americans who were wrongfully imprisoned by Russia. *Wall Street Journal* reporter Evan Gershkovich, former U.S. Marine Paul Whelan, Russian-American journalist Alsu Kurmasheva, and British-Russian dissident and Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Vladimir Kara-Murza, are free.

These Americans, who were imprisoned under unjust circumstances and suffered unimaginably at the hands of the Russian regime, represent the courage, resilience, and determination that define our nation's spirit. We rejoice alongside their families, friends, and all those around the world who value freedom and democracy.

Freedom fighters around the world were a constant inspiration to President Reagan, including *U.S. News & World Report* journalist Nicholas Daniloff who was detained by Russia in 1986 and released several weeks later in a negotiated prisoner swap. Speaking in 1988 at Spaso House in Moscow, he addressed the Soviet dissidents in the audience, saying, "I came here hoping to do what I could to give you strength. Yet I already know it is you who have strengthened me, you who have given me a message to carry back. While we press for human rights through diplomatic channels, you press with your very lives, day in, day out, year after year, risking your jobs, your homes, your all."

This moment requires us to acknowledge the vibrancy of our democracy, the strength of the American spirit, and those who make America what it is. And as we celebrate the homecoming of these Americans, we also long for the release of the countless other citizens of the free world wrongfully imprisoned in Russia and elsewhere.

We commend the diplomatic efforts of the United States and our allies in negotiating this release. While these individuals should have never been imprisoned, we are grateful to have them back on U.S. soil very soon.

Today, their agony is over and healing can begin.

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