

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 24, 2007

His Excellency Vladimir Putin
President of Russia
4 Staraya Square
Moscow, 103132
Russia

Dear Mr. President,

We write to express our deep concern regarding the recent action taken by the Prosecutor General in Moscow against one of Russia's most distinguished human rights attorneys, Ms. Karinna Moskalkenko. Last month, the Prosecutor General filed a request with the Moscow Bar Association to disbar Ms. Moskalkenko, who has represented many clients in courts of the Russia Federation and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in sensitive and sometimes high profile cases. We urge you to intervene immediately in these disbarment proceedings and to stop them.

The action taken by the Prosecutor General to initiate disbarment procedures against an attorney with an impeccable national and international reputation is nothing more than a blatant attempt of government intimidation by the Prosecutor to silence a distinguished officer of the Russian courts. This outrageous abuse of power does not only raise serious doubts about the rule of law in Russia, but will also have a chilling effect on other attorneys and their clients, who may want to seek redress from courts in the Russian Federation or higher courts abroad. Ms. Moskalkenko is the Founder of the International Protection Center, which provides legal advice and representation to many clients who would otherwise not easily obtain legal representation. As much as the Prosecutor's actions are focused on Ms. Moskalkenko, they certainly also target her clients, which include, among others, the family of the murdered journalist Anna Politkovskaya, political activist Garry Kasparov, the American victims of the siege of the Dubrovka Theatre, and imprisoned Russian businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

We strongly believe that our bilateral relations cannot focus solely on important security and trade matters, such as the Jackson-Vanik provisions in U.S. law. Rather, our relationship must be based on a firm commitment to and the promotion and observance of universal values, such as the freedom of speech and association, a free media, rule of law and human rights. We firmly believe that Ms. Karinna Moskalkenko's disbarment would extinguish what remains of the Russian people's constitutional right to a fair trial and their ability to appeal Russian court decisions before the ECHR.

We urge you in the strongest possible terms to call on the Prosecutor General to withdraw the request for Ms. Moskalkenko's disbarment, which would be unacceptable and unbecoming of a nation which considers itself a proud member and respected partner of the G8.

Sincerely,



TOM LANTOS, M.C.
Co-Chair,
Congressional Human Right's Caucus



FRANK R. WOLF, M.C.
Co-Chair,
Congressional Human Right's Caucus



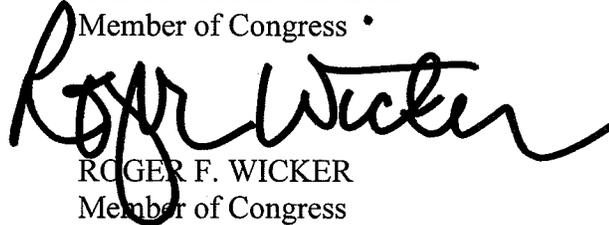
DIANE E. WATSON
Member of Congress



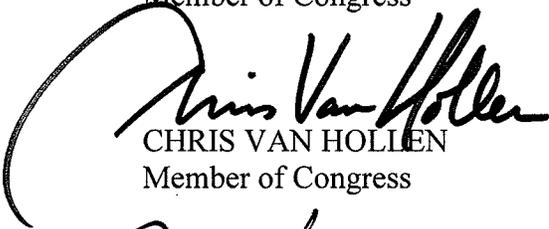
CHRISTOPHER SMITH
Member of Congress



LLOYD DOGGETT
Member of Congress



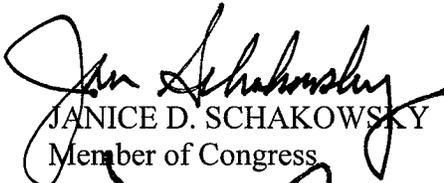
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JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress



CAROLYN C. KILPATRICK
Member of Congress



TAMMY BALDWIN
Member of Congress



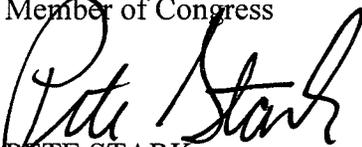
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