

[ceecouncil.org](http://ceecouncil.org)

## THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNCIL IN CANADA

### **Canadians Call on Parliament to Adopt “Magnitsky” Legislation**

May 23, 2016

**TORONTO** - The Central and Eastern European Council in Canada, representing the interests of nearly 4 million Canadians of Central and Eastern European heritage, is deeply concerned with the recent remarks by Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs stating it is unnecessary to adopt Magnitsky legislation, that would ban Russian human rights abusers from entering and hiding their assets in Canada.

The Government of Canada must remain strong and unequivocal in its condemnation of the Russian regime’s appalling human rights record. The adoption of Magnitsky legislation sends a strong signal that these ongoing human rights violations are unacceptable to Canada.

Former Liberal Party interim leader Bob Rae recently said that, “The decision by the government to re-engage with Russia and Iran and other countries should never mean that we lower our own standards with respect to conduct by individuals who are working in those systems.”

The Putin regime’s violations of international laws; its escalating repression of domestic rights and activists; and its history of ongoing aggressive position on regional issues must not go unchecked. The Russian government has violated the international legal and security framework with their:

- Military invasion, occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russia’s ongoing aggression in Eastern Ukraine;
- Continued human rights violations in occupied Crimea against Ukrainian and the indigenous Crimean Tatar communities;
- A precipitous decline in press freedom such that Russia now ranks 183rd out of 202 countries according to Freedom House’s 2016 international rankings;
- The imprisonment, attempted murder and assassination of the Putin regime’s political opponents including Boris Nemtsov, Vladimir Kara-Murza, Alexei Navalny and over 150 other political prisoners
- The illegal detention and imprisonment of Ukrainian Parliamentarian Nadiya Savchenko and some 20 other Ukrainian citizens, in breach of international law;
- Ongoing persecution of human rights and pro-democracy activists and the systematic violations of basic democratic principles including elections;
- Violent, accelerating, persecution of Russia’s LGBT community;
- Creation of a National Guard paramilitary force directly subordinate to President Putin with the right to shoot protestors without warning;
- Shooting down of a civilian airliner, Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, a scheduled international passenger flight over eastern Ukraine with a loss of 298 passengers and crew; and
- Prolonging the Syrian civil war and inflaming the refugee crisis with air strikes against civilian infrastructure and non-ISIS opponents of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The Canadian government should be reminded that the OSCE has called “on national parliaments to take action to impose visa sanctions and asset freezes on persons responsible for the false arrest, torture, denial of medical care and death of Sergei Magnitsky.” The United States is currently in the final stages of adopting a Global Magnitsky Act that targets human rights abusers around the world with sanctions.

Magnitsky legislation sanctions only the wrongdoers - those who steal and murder- and avoids punishing innocent Russians who make up the vast majority of the country’s population. It also serves Canada’s long term interests by encouraging a Russian political and legal environment that upholds the rule of law and values public accountability – essential elements for protecting Canadian investments in Russia.

The CEEC calls on the Liberal Government to honour its election commitments and we ask that Prime Minister Trudeau respects the will of Parliament and permit Bill C-267, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (The Sergei Magnitsky Law), to proceed unhindered to a free vote.

Marcus Kolga  
Interim Chair, Central and Eastern European Council  
President, Estonian Central Council

For more information contact:  
Marcus Kolga: [marcuskolga@gmail.com](mailto:marcuskolga@gmail.com)