

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 8, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
The United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

In our capacities as Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation, we write with tremendous concern about the treatment of Russian politician Alexei Navalny and recent reports that Russian authorities are denying him appropriate medical care while incarcerated. Even more, reports allege that Russian authorities may be taking active measures to damage his health while he is in their custody. While this may be keeping in character for the Russian government, it is an outrage to anyone who believes in the rule of law or even the most basic standards of human rights.

We are all aware of how President Putin and his henchmen treat people who do not support the current Russian regime. The list of political opponents who have turned up dead is long. It is therefore easy to imagine the fate of political figures like Mr. Navalny, who after being convicted in a kangaroo court is now enduring the wrath of the Russian penal system. The regime could now be on the verge of ensuring that the verdict of that sham tribunal is a death sentence. Recall that it was not even a year ago that Vladimir Putin's thugs tried to murder Mr. Navalny. Through the extreme malevolence and callousness of its conduct at home and abroad, the Putin regime has lost its credibility, and these allegations of maltreatment must be taken seriously.

Democratic allies and partners across the globe must not sit silently and observe this injustice from the sidelines. Mr. Navalny was under no illusions about the risks he was taking when he returned to Russia following his poisoning, and we should know full well about the costs of inaction. There must be a resounding message from the United States and our European allies that there are consequences for recent actions with real costs to the beneficiaries of the regime. We must ensure that the cost is significant enough to deter this type of appalling behavior. When the Russian regime killed Sergei Magnitsky, we reacted by enacting the Magnitsky Act, followed by the Global Magnitsky Act. We passed these laws as a reminder that egregious violations of human rights should not go unpunished. We must stand ready, however, to do more.

We welcome the sanctions the Biden Administration has already placed on Russian officials and entities associated with last year's poisoning of Mr. Navalny. However, the United States and our European partners must do more to secure immediate medical treatment for Mr. Navalny and secure his release from his unjust incarceration. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ordered in February that Mr. Navalny be freed, noting the "nature and extent of the risk to [his] life," a decision binding on all ECHR signatories – including Russia. The sanctions implemented by EU members following that ruling are helpful, but they are not enough.

The Kremlin must be held accountable. We stand ready to consult with the Administration on any potential legislative remedies that may be required.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator
Chair, Subcommittee on Europe and Regional
Security Cooperation



Ron Johnson
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Europe
and Regional Security Cooperation