

April 25, 2022

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

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington D.C. 20530

Dear Secretary Blinken and Attorney General Garland:

As Russia continues to commit atrocities and prosecute an unprovoked and illegal war in Ukraine, I write to emphasize the urgency of removing Russia from Interpol and protecting Interpol from the corrupting influence of authoritarian governments. On March 6 our government joined our allies in calling for Russia to be suspended from Interpol. Fifty days later Russia remains a fully active member. Now is the time for freedom-loving countries committed to the rule of law to act and ensure Vladimir Putin no longer has a voice, vote, and influence in international law enforcement organizations.

Russia's lawless invasion of Ukraine laid bare Vladimir Putin's longstanding contempt for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Recent atrocities committed by Russian forces in the occupied areas of Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Kyiv underscore that these values have no purchase in the Russian government or in its military.

As Attorney General Garland has recognized, such a nation has no place in an international organization like Interpol, whose mission is to promote international law enforcement cooperation consistent with the rule of law and the protection of individual rights.

As I explained in my December 2021 letter to you regarding Hu Binchen's nomination to Interpol's Executive Committee, authoritarian countries, specifically Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC), have abused Interpol to undermine human rights and the rule of law outside their borders. This includes abusing "red notices," which inform police about internationally wanted fugitives, to target political opponents and dissidents on foreign soil.

Interpol's decision on March 10 to implement "heightened supervision and monitoring measures" for Russia is a small step in the right direction. But it is not sufficient to protect Interpol against potential abuses by the Russian government or to ensure that Russia does not exploit Interpol's intelligence sharing function to further harm the people of Ukraine.

I wholeheartedly support Attorney General Garland's March 6 call with counterparts from Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand to remove Russia from Interpol. Interpol should follow the lead of the UN General Assembly, which voted to remove Russia from the UN Human Rights Council on April 7.

Removing Russia from Interpol should be a top priority. With that in mind, please respond to the following questions within 21 days:

- Interpol's constitution does not contain any provision for the suspension or exclusion of a member country.
 - To the best of your understanding, what is the process (or processes) by which Russia could be removed from Interpol?
 - What steps have the Department of Justice and Department of State taken to execute the Attorney General's call to remove Russia from Interpol? Have these steps been taken in coordination with our FVEY counterparts?
 - What are the primary hurdles to removing Russia from Interpol? How do the Department of Justice and the Department of State plan to address those challenges?
- Interpol's March 10 announcement related to Russia suggested that calls to exclude Russia from Interpol were "political," whereas calls to continue providing Russia with access to Interpol information reflected "serious security and safety concerns."
 - To better understand this argument and its persuasiveness, please explain whether other Interpol members raised concerns related to Russia's ongoing participation in or exclusion from Interpol. Please also describe the concerns raised.
 - Please also explain any such concerns raised by members of the Executive Committee.
 - What steps have the DOJ and State taken to substantiate the security and safety concerns that Russia poses by its participation in Interpol?

- On March 10, Interpol announced that Russia can no longer send “diffusions,” a less formal type of request for cooperation, directly to member countries. Instead, Russia must send them to the General Secretariat to be checked for compliance with Interpol rules.
 - Given this policy change, what is the standard that the General Secretariat is using to review Russia’s requested diffusions to ensure that they are compliant with the mission of Interpol and with the protection of human rights and the rule of law?
 - What steps is Interpol taking to ensure that Russia cannot abuse red notices?
- In a classified setting, if necessary:
 - Please describe any collaboration or other cooperation between the PRC and Russia related to Russia’s engagement with Interpol, the red notice system, or other requests for international law enforcement cooperation.
 - Please explain whether the DOJ or State have observed any activities which could suggest that Russia is cooperating with any other member state – including the PRC – to bypass Interpol’s recent policy changes related to Russia.

I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Ben Sasse
U.S. Senator