

## Whelan Family Statement

Paul Whelan is free. Our family is grateful to the United States government for making Paul's freedom a reality. We'd like to thank President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, and National Security Advisor Sullivan for their engagement with the Russian Federation to create the environment where Paul's freedom became a possibility.

Members of the United States Congress were key advocates, and we are thankful for their unswerving support from the very beginning. A special note of thanks is owed to Representative Haley Stevens and her staff, who represent the Michigan district Paul lived in, and who provided advice and comfort to our family as Paul's case wore on. Representative Tim Walberg's concern for our parents, who live in his district, was much appreciated. They and other members of the Michigan delegation—Senators Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow, Representatives Debbie Dingell, Dan Kildee, Andy Levin, and Elissa Slotkin—as well as Representatives Bill Keating (MA) and Peter King (NY) were emblematic of what representative democracy is about.

Paul was held hostage for 2,043 days. His case was that of an American in peril, held by the Russian Federation as part of their blighted initiative to use humans as pawns to extract concessions. Our family is grateful that members of Congress from both sides of the aisle expressed concern for Paul as an American, regardless of politics. Representatives Eliot Engel, Gregory Meeks, and Michael McCaul's leadership on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and their public advocacy for Paul helped raise the profile of his case. Senators Robert Menendez, James Risch, Marco Rubio, Jeanne Shaheen, and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations focused on the Russian Federation's and other bad actors' use of Americans as political collateral in lieu of diplomacy. The numerous resolutions passed by the House and Senate were important signals of support for wrongfully detained Americans.

There is no way to thank the many Americans and others who helped and gave hope to Paul from afar, writing letters and donating to his GoFundMe prison account. We are grateful for the assistance that, like Paul's extended family, came from across the globe. Family friends like the Stitch and Bitch crew wrote to Paul and government officials and supported our parents. Mark Whelan and his family in the UK sent care packages, drawings by young students, and hope, to try to keep Paul's morale up. Fellow veterans who knew Paul from his service in Iraq contacted us so that they could write him directly or we could pass on their words of encouragement and friendship. Brittney Griner's encouragement to write to Paul led to an avalanche of mail and donations that kept his spirits up.

Some people supported and advocated for Paul individually. Many people, like Diane Foley and Margaux Ewen at the James Foley Foundation, cared about Paul as they care about everyone who is held hostage and we valued their advocacy too. The great people at HostageUS, like Cris Bohanski, Liz Cathcart, Katie Hunter, and Winnie Lee, enabled us to understand not just what

Paul might be experiencing but to start to anticipate what his return to freedom will look like. They connected our family members to mental health and other volunteers to help us help Paul.

We are grateful to others who have been held hostage by the Russian Federation and who took the time to talk with our family about their own ordeals. Nicholas Daniloff and Edmond Pope experienced their own suffering in remarkably similar entrapments and coercive detentions in Russia. Their insights helped us steel our resolve for the long haul. Their own bids for freedom gave us hope as the months stretched into years.

Early on, we were discouraged from speaking out about Paul's case. But we believe the media attention has been a crucial factor in securing Paul's freedom. Those first years were hard when the Trump Administration ignored Paul's wrongful detention, and it was media attention that helped to finally create critical mass and awareness within the U.S. government. We recognize the sacrifices journalists took to dig into Paul's case, to understand for themselves and to help us understand what had happened. This was done at personal and professional risk, as the Russian Federation is not open to media who probe its corrupt security services. Often, the media was our only source of information about Paul's case. We appreciate all the efforts by so many journalists and producers and other staff who kept covering Paul's case over the years.

Paul is not a spy. And his family members are not lobbyists, publicists, negotiators, or specialists of any kind when it comes to international hostage scenarios. While we did our best, as amateurs with limited resources, we do not believe Paul would be free today without the expert help we received behind the scenes.

Our attempts to interact with people in the Trump administration were greatly improved with the help of David Urban at American Continental Group, who attempted to have conversations we could not. Early on, Juleanna Glover and Veronika Velch at Ridgley|Walsh helped us with communication strategy and coordination. Their Washington DC-based efforts were important to our initial advocacy for Paul's freedom.

Paul also would not have been able to survive this ordeal without local help. Thanks to Sveta and other Russian US Embassy employees who helped with information translations and calls to the prison. Thanks to people like Dr. Sardaev, a dentist, Maria at a Moscow bookstore, and Sergey, a grocer, who helped by merely doing their jobs and represented the average Russian, who isn't any different from the average American. And thank you to Vladimir Zherebenkov and Olga Karlova, Russian lawyers who did as well as anyone could have in such an abhorrent system. There is much rotten in Russia's government, but it is not representative of all of its people.

Finally, we want to recognize the incredible work and professionalism of the involved governments and the generosity of time, empathy, and wisdom of Ryan Fayhee.

Ambassador Jon Huntsman initiated what has been extraordinary advocacy for an American in peril when he visited Paul at Lefortovo prison on January 2, 2019, as soon as the Russians allowed a visitor. The support from the U.S. State Department has been extensive. In particular, Special

Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs Roger Carstens' assistance throughout this ordeal, and that of his staff, including Jeremy Cassano, Steven Gillen, Claudia Miller, Charlotte Nazanin, Sam Ostrander, Fletcher Schoen, Dustin Stewart, and Carolee Walker, is greatly valued. National Security Council staff David Cotter, Joshua Geltzer, Clare Linkins, Alex Miller, and Chandler Yonge were key conduits for information that helped us understand what might or might not be possible.

State Department staff based at the U.S. Embassy in Russia were key to advocacy for Paul and supporting him. The Embassy staff— including Luke Davis, Ryan Feeback, Richard Hanrahan, Cathy Holt, Andrea Kalan, Eric Lester, Geoff Martineau, Paul Mastin, Kathryn Porter, Rebecca Ross, Abby Rupp, James Waterman, and Michael Yoder, and the many Russian citizens who worked for the US Embassy —were vital links to Paul and a source of support during the many months of his wrongful detention. Their efforts and those of US-based staff at the State Department's Consular Affairs and American Citizen Services, including Michael Abbott, Emma Browning, Vicky Bonasera, Eugene Garmize, Maria Germano, Dr. Young Hoang, Ben Medina, Teresa Mendel, Katie Morris, Rob Romanowski, and Stuart Wilson, helped us get vital resources— like mail, and money for his prison bank account—to Paul. In the early years, Embassy staff shopped and delivered fresh groceries to Paul when the prison did not provide them. However awful Paul's experience has been, it would have been much worse without their help.

It is important to recognize the representatives of the Canadian, British, and Irish governments as well. Each Embassy has provided Paul with consular support—visits, coordination of materials for his survival, disbursement of prisoner funds, delivery of mail and hope—both in Moscow and Mordovia. The Canadian-led Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention arose 2 years after Paul's detention began. We have appreciated the subsequent advocacy by Julie Sunday and Global Affairs Canada as well as that of Jennifer Anderson, Joanna Wilde, and Jennifer Jones from the UK. Visits by Ambassadors and other senior representatives of the Canadian, UK, and Irish governments meant that Paul, and the Kremlin, knew support for his freedom was broad and constant.

Ambassador John Sullivan and Ambassador Lynne Tracy continued the pressure when they took over their post. Ambassador Sullivan's early and frequent public statements and attempts to attend Paul's trial meant so much to our family. Both Ambassadors took the risky and arduous trip to Mordovia to see Paul, which meant so much to him. Their efforts were bolstered by consistent advocacy by Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Under-Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, and others in venues including the United Nations Security Council. The Embassy staff continued to advocate for Paul, just as they do for all Americans in the Russian Federation, over social media, with their counterparts in the Russian government, with members of the Trump and Biden Administrations, and with Congress. It is unfathomable to our family how we would have been able to continue our own advocacy for Paul without this help.

The family of a hostage is isolated, and it can be hard to know who can help and who to trust. We will never be able to adequately thank Ryan Fayhee for making contact back in January 2019

and his subsequent support. Ryan volunteered his expertise, providing strategic insights and wise counsel because he cared about a fellow American. Our family is incredibly grateful to Hughes Hubbard, and to Katie McRae, Alea Stanton, and Elizabeth Wollan, as well as to Akin Gump, for enabling Ryan to act pro bono as an advisor on Paul's case. There are no words to express what Ryan's courage, self-sacrifice, and kindness has meant to our family.

Paul Whelan is not in a Russian labor colony any longer, but he is not home. While Paul was wrongfully imprisoned in Russia, he lost his home. He lost his job. We are unsure how someone overcomes these losses and rejoins society after being a hostage. We are grateful for everyone's efforts to help Paul while he was away. We hope you will continue to help him by providing Paul the space and privacy he needs as he rebuilds his life. It is Paul's story to tell and he will tell it when he is able.

*\*\* I started this document in August 2022 and have tried to recognize everyone who I felt could be safely recognized. My apologies to anyone I have inadvertently left out. David.*