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Congress of the United States
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His Excellency Jacques Pitteloud
Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States of America
Embassy of Switzerland
2201 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Suite 300
Washington, DC 20007-4105

March 8, 2021

Dear Ambassador Pitteloud,

I write to you as a strong supporter of the U.S.-Swiss bilateral relationship, and with a keen interest in seeing this relationship remain as strong as possible.

I am concerned to learn that Magnitsky-sanctioned criminals from Russia are attempting to leverage Switzerland's legal system to attack supporters of the Russian anti-corruption activist and opposition leader, Alexei Navalny. These targets, I am told, are often former Russian businessmen such as dissident Russian banker Yaroslav Alekseev, who is currently the subject of a Russian request for Mutual Legal Assistance to Switzerland that has resulted in the freezing of his assets.

I have been informed that Mr. Alekseev was the Chairman of a Russian bank, Bank24.ru, which led the development of a "cash-back" credit card program for Mr. Navalny's anti-corruption foundation, which placed him firmly in the Kremlin's crosshairs. I understand that Mr. Alekseev fled to Europe in 2015 after his bank's parent company, Probusinessbank, was abruptly expropriated by the Russian state. Several of his colleagues who remained in Russia were held for years in deplorable conditions in pre-trial detention, where they were pressured to sign false witness statements by Russian prosecutors. It is my understanding that the European Court of Human Rights was petitioned to review the cases, and ruled that Russia committed multiple violations of human rights and due process in its persecution of the Probusinessbank executives.

I am told that in 2019, Russia attempted to extradite Mr. Alekseev from Poland, where he was detained pursuant to an INTERPOL red notice filed by Russia. After reviewing extensive evidence, the Polish courts rejected Russia's INTERPOL extradition request as politically motivated and a violation of Mr. Alekseev's human rights. Regrettably, countries like Russia and China are known to abuse INTERPOL's red notice system as a mechanism to enlist the help of other countries in tracking down, retaliating against, and punishing political dissidents abroad.

Switzerland's courts are not facing abusive Russian tactics alone. I understand that several American Congressmen wrote to Liechtenstein's Ambassador to the United States last year to express concern about Russian intrusion in that country's judicial system as well.

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President Putin and his cronies have no respect for democratic values and norms. Western nations must stand together to mount a strong defense against attacks against our institutions. I hope your government will review the Alekseev case very carefully, take decisive actions to protect your country's institutions from malign actors and do everything in your power to safeguard the rights of all those who come before Swiss courts seeking justice.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to the opportunity to work with you on matters of mutual importance to our two countries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Waltz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" written in a smaller, more compact script and the last name "Waltz" written in a larger, more prominent, and stylized cursive font.

Michael Waltz