

Treasury Sanctions Russians Connected to Gross Human Rights Violations and Corrupt Leader of Belarus

March 15, 2022

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated four individuals and one entity pursuant to the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012 (the Russia Magnitsky Act). These Russia Magnitsky Act targets were involved in concealing events surrounding the death of renowned Russian whistleblower Sergei Magnitsky, or were connected to gross violations of human rights against Russian human rights defender Oyub Titiev. Treasury is also re-designating Alyaksandr Lukashenka of Belarus, the head of a corrupt government in Belarus whose patronage network benefits his inner circle and regime, and newly designating his wife pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13405.

“Today’s designations demonstrate the United States will continue to impose concrete and significant consequences for those who engage in corruption or are connected to gross violations of human rights,” said OFAC Director Andrea Gacki. “We condemn Russia’s attacks on humanitarian corridors in Ukraine and call on Russia to cease its unprovoked and brutal war against Ukraine.”

CONCEALING THE LEGAL LIABILITY FOR THE DETENTION, ABUSE, OR DEATH OF WHISTLEBLOWER SERGEI MAGNITSKY

Sergei Magnitsky, the namesake of the Russia Magnitsky Act, was an attorney and auditor who uncovered a large-scale tax fraud scheme by Russian officials while performing audit work for the Russia-based firm Hermitage Capital Management. In November 2008, he was arrested and detained by Russian authorities shortly after testifying as a witness as part of a complaint filed by Hermitage Capital Management alleging that a group of officials in the Russian Interior Ministry had been involved in a 5.4 billion ruble (\$230 million) tax fraud involving three Hermitage-owned companies, Riland, Parfenion, and Makhaon. Russian Interior Ministry officials had previously raided the Hermitage offices and removed the original seals of incorporation for those three Hermitage-owned companies. The companies then were illegally re-registered under different ownership, and sham lawsuits were brought against those

companies — with the same lawyers on both sides of the case — resulting in large court judgments against the three companies, for which the companies then claimed a significant and illegal tax refund from the Russian government. For exposing this fraud, Magnitsky was subjected to physical abuse and psychological pressure while detained, and on November 16, 2009, he died in a pretrial detention center in Moscow.

Following his death, Congress passed the Russia Magnitsky Act in 2012, authorizing sanctions for those involved in, or who took actions related to, the detention, abuse, or death of Sergei Magnitsky as well as against others who are connected to gross violations of human rights in Russia.

Natalia Mushnikova (Mushnikova), a district judge in Moscow, Russia, is being designated today for participating in efforts to conceal the legal liability for the detention, abuse, or death of Sergei Magnitsky. Russian authorities conducted a flawed and incomplete investigation into the cause of Magnitsky's death and failed to hold accountable the individuals determined to be responsible for his death. Mushnikova rejected an appeal from Magnitsky's mother requesting that post-mortem tissue samples of her son be turned over for an independent medical review after his family saw indications of abuse on his body. Mushnikova's ruling to deny an independent autopsy of Magnitsky contributed to the concealment and obstruction of the release of evidence related to his mistreatment during his detention and ultimate cause of death.

Mushnikova was designated today pursuant to the Russia Magnitsky Act for participating in efforts to conceal the legal liability for the detention, abuse, or death of Sergei Magnitsky.

GROSS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN RUSSIA PERPETRATED AGAINST OYUB TITIEV

Prominent human rights defender Oyub Titiev (Titiev) is the long-time leader of the Chechen branch of Memorial, a recently banned Russian organization that documented human rights violations and advocated for civil rights, which Russian authorities recently ordered to close on politically motivated grounds. Titiev was closely involved in Memorial's investigation into allegations of summary executions of 27 individuals by Republic of Chechnya security officials in 2017. Titiev was detained and convicted on drug-related charges based on falsified evidence.

In January 2018, officers from the **Kurchaloi District of the Chechen Republic Branch of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation** (Kurchaloi OMVD) arrested Titiev and charged him with possession of drugs, an allegation that Titiev, Memorial, international

human rights groups, and international organizations have denounced as fabricated. After Titiev himself pointed out procedural problems related to his arrest, he was reportedly placed back in his vehicle, in which drugs were planted a second time, and he was arrested again on the same day. During Titiev's pre-trial detention, the Kurchaloi OMVD pressured him to confess and initially denied him access to his attorney. Kurchaloi OMVD officers also harassed and threatened Titiev's family, who subsequently fled Chechnya for their own safety. After a seven-month trial in which more than 50 Kurchaloi OMVD officers testified, Titiev was ultimately convicted and sentenced to a four-year prison sentence. After almost a year and a half in detention, Titiev was granted parole in June 2019.

Nurid Denilbekovich Salamov (Salamov) was the Kurchaloi OMVD investigator who opened the case against Titiev and headed the investigative group. **Khusein Merlovich Khutaev** (Khutaev) was the Kurchaloi OMVD officer who allegedly spotted the drugs in Titiev's car, providing the basis for Titiev's arrest. **Dzhabrail Alkhazurovich Akhmatov** (Akhmatov) decided to bring charges against and prosecute Titiev, and request a four-year prison sentence, despite there being reason to believe that the evidence against Titiev was fabricated.

The Kurchaloi OMVD and Akhmatov, the prosecutor of the Kurchaloi District of Chechnya, were designated today pursuant to the Russia Magnitsky Act for having acted as agents of or on behalf of the government of Chechnya in a matter relating to extrajudicial killings, torture, or other gross violations of internationally recognized human rights committed against an individual seeking to obtain, exercise, defend, or promote internationally recognized human rights and freedoms, such as the freedom of religion, expression, association, and assembly, and the rights to a fair trial and democratic elections, in Russia.

Salamov and Khutaev were designated today for having acted as agents of or on behalf of the Kurchaloi OMVD in a matter relating to extrajudicial killings, torture, or other gross violations of internationally recognized human rights committed against an individual seeking to obtain, exercise, defend, or promote internationally recognized human rights and freedoms, such as the freedom of religion, expression, association, and assembly, and the rights to a fair trial and democratic elections in Russia.

ALYAKSANDR RYHOROVICH LUKASHENKA AND WIFE

Despite coming to power nearly 30 years ago on an anti-corruption platform, **Alyaksandr Ryhorovich Lukashenka** (Lukashenka) has used his authorities to grant unique privileges and advantages to his associates that could only be offered by the Belarusian state, including, but

not limited to, government support, assets, property, amended governmental policies, financial relief, and an acceptance of smuggling of certain goods. Lukashenka has also targeted entrepreneurs whom he deemed had betrayed the Belarusian state through their support for the political opposition. For example, the Lukashenka regime used various levers, from health inspections to pressuring landlords to raise rents, in order to target businesses that participated in a nationwide strike in the autumn of 2020.

Lukashenka rewards businessmen close to him with benefits and privileges in exchange for kickbacks to him and his regime. For example, Lukashenka enacted strategic policies that facilitate tobacco smuggling by Aliaksei Aleksin (Aleksin), granting Aleksin a virtual monopoly over the Belarusian tobacco industry. OFAC designated Aleksin on August 9, 2021, for being a person closely linked to a senior-level official who is responsible for or has engaged in public corruption related to Belarus.

Lukashenka's sons Dzmitry and Viktor Lukashenka were sanctioned on December 2, 2021, and June 16, 2006, respectively. Today, Treasury is designating one more member of Lukashenka's immediate family: Lukashenka's wife **Halina Radzivonawna Lukashenka** (Halina).

Lukashenka remains married to Halina, Dzmitry and Viktor's mother.

Lukashenka was designated today pursuant to E.O. 13405 for being a senior-level official who is responsible for or has engaged in public corruption related to Belarus. Previously, Lukashenka was blocked pursuant to the same authority on June 16, 2006, when President George W. Bush included him in the Annex to the order.

Halina was designated today pursuant to E.O. 13405 for being a senior-level official, family member of such an official, or a person closely linked to such an official who is responsible for or has engaged in public corruption related to Belarus.

[Additionally, the Department of State designated 11 senior Russian defense officials pursuant to E.O. 10424.](#)

SANCTIONS IMPLICATIONS

As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property of the persons above that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons are blocked and must be reported to OFAC. In addition, any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, 50 percent or more by one or more blocked persons are also blocked. Unless authorized by a general or specific license issued by OFAC, or exempt, OFAC's regulations generally prohibit all transactions by U.S. persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any

property or interests in property of designated or otherwise blocked persons. The prohibitions include the making of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of any blocked person or the receipt of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services from any such person.

[For more information on the individuals and entity designated today, click here.](#)

###