



## Congress of the United States

April 30, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We were deeply disturbed by two videos that emerged online earlier this month of Russian soldiers allegedly beheading Ukrainian Prisoners of War (POWs). We write today to express strong bipartisan support for the United States to call, in coordination with other United Nation (UN) Member States, for an investigation into the authenticity of this video footage and, if the videos are confirmed to be genuine, we urge you and our allies to hold those involved accountable.

Over the past few weeks, we have seen videos depicting the beheading of Ukrainian soldiers. The most recent, from April 11th, purportedly shows the gruesome beheading of a Ukrainian soldier, who was alive at the start of the act. The second, posted days prior, showed the bodies of two decapitated Ukrainian soldiers. It is our understanding that it is unclear where and when these alleged murders occurred. An investigation to confirm the legitimacy of these videos is a vital first step to holding those involved accountable.

Beheadings are an active violation of Article 3 of the Geneva Convention, which states that “violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture” is prohibited. The USSR ratified the Geneva Conventions in 1954 and following its dissolution, Russia declared itself the legal successor of the Soviets and, therefore, recognized itself as a party to international treaties signed by the USSR, including the Geneva Conventions. The international community must take a strong stance in condemning violations of human rights and upholding international humanitarian law. We commend the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine for calling for an investigation into these appalling allegations and strongly urge the UN to launch a formal investigation into the authenticity of these videos. We strongly encourage the United States to support these efforts in calling for a thorough investigation into the videos.


According to Article 4 of the UN Charter’s membership admissions rule, “Membership in the United Nations is open to all other peace-loving states which accept the obligations contained in the present Charter and, in the judgment of the Organization, are able and willing to carry out these obligations.” For the last fourteen months, Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine has resulted

in thousands of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of the Geneva Conventions and international law.

We applaud the suspension of Russia from the UN Human Rights Council a year ago. More must be done to hold Russia accountable. Russia's Ambassador to the UN holds the presidency of the UN Security Council this month, and a Russian judge is the Vice President of the International Court of Justice. Russia's blatant disregard for human rights throughout its illegal invasion of Ukraine is contradictory to the UN Charter and the democratic principles that we strive to uphold.


We strongly request you to urge the UN to launch an investigation into the authenticity of these videos and provide all possible support to investigations – including intelligence support if authorized under U.S. law – concerning war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of the Geneva Conventions and international law. We appreciate your continued attention to upholding the values of international law and human rights standards, and we urge timely action. Thank you for your ongoing support in holding Russia accountable for vast human rights violations.

Sincerely,




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James A. Himes  
Member of Congress



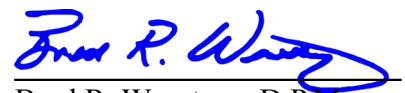
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Chris Stewart  
Member of Congress



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Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress



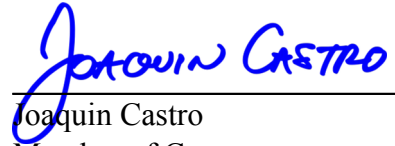
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Brad R. Wenstrup, D.P.M.  
Member of Congress



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Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



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Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



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Elise M. Stefanik  
Member of Congress



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Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress



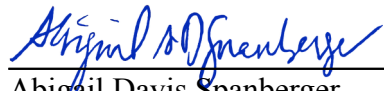
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress




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Abigail Davis Spanberger  
Member of Congress



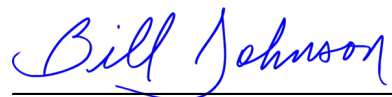
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Dan Crenshaw  
Member of Congress



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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



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Bill Johnson  
Member of Congress



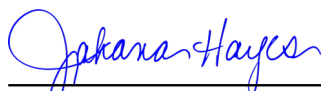
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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



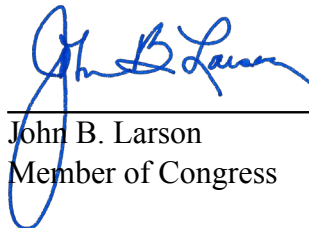
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Burgess Owens  
Member of Congress



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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



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John B. Larson  
Member of Congress



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Michael Waltz  
Member of Congress



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Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress



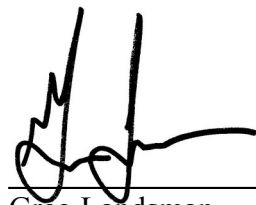
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David J. Trone  
Member of Congress



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Eric A. "Rick" Crawford  
Member of Congress



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Greg Landsman  
Member of Congress




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Jason Crow  
Member of Congress



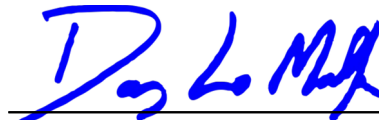
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August Pfluger  
Member of Congress



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Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress



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Doug LaMalfa  
Member of Congress



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Ami Bera, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



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Jim Tokuda  
Member of Congress



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Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress

CC: U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield