

Get Rid of U.S. Cliches About the Russian Mafia

By [Vadim Lyalin](#)

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I was placed on the U.S. Treasury Department "blacklist" on Oct. 31 along with singer Gregory Leps. It is my firm conviction that this was a flagrant mistake.

I have always thought that anyone charged with wrongdoing should have the right to present his side of the story, which I would like to do in this comment. I hope U.S. authorities will be fair and impartial in their assessments and not succumb to superficial cliches and stereotypes about the "Russian mafia."

As a lawyer, I understand that the presumption of innocence is a fundamental legal principle that distinguishes civilized societies from savages. This applies to me and all of the clients I represent — regardless of the groundless negative labels that the media recklessly attach to them, which effectively violates the presumption-of-innocence principle.

I am willing to answer any questions, provide necessary clarifications and present compelling

evidence demonstrating the error of the conclusions reached about me that led to U.S. allegations that I am part of the organized crime syndicate of the nonexistent "Brothers' Circle."

I am willing to present my arguments in court. I have done nothing wrong. I am not a criminal and have never supported criminals, terrorists or other illegal groups. I will fight until my dying day on behalf of honest and upright people and against any form of criminal or terrorist activity.

I sincerely hope that a closer examination of my life and activities will convince U.S. authorities of my personal efforts to defend the rights and freedoms of Russian citizens from lawlessness and terror.

My numerous accomplishments have been recognized by the Interior Ministry, the Federal Security Service, veterans' organizations and the Moscow legal community in the form of certificates of appreciation, expressions of personal gratitude and even decorations that I proudly wear on the uniform that I wore when I was a member of an Interior Ministry's elite special forces unit.

I currently devote much of my time to science, teaching adolescents about patriotism, providing social support for veterans and working to develop methods for preventing all forms of crime and terrorism. My main work involves protecting citizens in my capacity as a lawyer.

I hope that most Americans and the U.S. Treasury Department will be able to recognize the terrible mistake the U.S. government has made. I also hope they will find the strength and integrity to remove my name from the blacklist and from any alleged association with the Brothers' Circle.

Vadim Lyalin is a Moscow-based lawyer.

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