

Russian Court Orders U.S. NGO Consultant's Deportation

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Gaspar told that authorities had never provided her with documentation explaining why she had been deemed a national security threat.

A St. Petersburg court ruled Tuesday to deport U.S. citizen Jennifer Gaspar, an independent consultant for NGOs in Russia, after she was deemed a threat to national security in a case critics say is linked to the work of her Russian husband, a prominent human rights lawyer.

The decision comes two weeks after Gaspar and her husband Ivan Pavlov discovered a deportation order for her from the Federal Migration Service in their mailbox.

"We expected the court's decision today, but we will appeal," Gaspar said. "We consider this to be the expulsion of my whole family, of my husband and [five-year-old] daughter who are Russian citizens."

Gaspar told The Moscow Times that authorities had never provided her with documentation

explaining why she had been deemed a national security threat. Every motion her legal counsel made was denied by the judge, she said.

"From a legal perspective, I can say that there was a trial but no actual discussion or investigation," said Pavlov, who has been practicing law for nearly 20 years. "We were never provided with any explanation as to why Jennifer's deportation was being considered in the first place."

Requests for comment on the case sent earlier this month to the Federal Security Service, a successor agency of the KGB that the migration service said had initiated the deportation, went unanswered.

The deportation ruling was vague, according to the couple, and did not provide a date by which Gaspar would have to leave the country.

"It is still not clear whether I already would have to have left the country 15 days after receiving the deportation letter, or whether I will need to leave the country immediately, or 15 days after today's ruling," Gaspar said. "In any case, we are now packing our bags."

The couple believes that Pavlov's work as a human rights lawyer and the deterioration of relations between Russia and the U.S. made Gaspar and her family an easy target for authorities.

Pavlov is the founder of the Institute for Information Freedom Development, a nongovernmental organization that has advocated transparency in the Russian government since 2004. After Pavlov met with U.S. President Barack Obama at the G20 summit in St. Petersburg in 2013, the NGO was given the politically charged label "foreign agent," a tag that has been used by the state since 2012 to designate NGOs that receive foreign funding and engage in broadly defined "political activity."

Gaspar, who has lived in Russia for a decade, applied for Russian citizenship a month after the G20 summit. Her application was rejected in April amid Russia's souring relations with the U.S. over the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing crisis in Ukraine.

The couple said they would be leaving as a family, though their situation is complicated by the fact that neither Pavlov nor the couple's daughter are American citizens.

"We have to leave the country, but that is not as simple as it may seem," Pavlov said, declining to specify where the family would be headed. "My daughter and I are Russian citizens and we do not have residency permits or visas for any other countries."

When asked what advice she would give to foreigners living in Russia, Gaspar sounded a note of caution.

"Don't look at anyone the wrong way," she said. "People are expected to toe the official line these days. No dissent will be tolerated."

See also:

[U.S. NGO Consultant Faces Deportation in 'Perfect Storm'](#)

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