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Russia Wants New U.S. Administration to End 'Illegal Abductions' of Russians

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Viktor Bout listens to a reporter's question from inside a cell at a criminal court in Bangkok, in 2010.
Apichart Weerawong / AP

Russia's Foreign Ministry plans to ask the new U.S. presidential administration to halt what it calls "illegal abductions" of Russian citizens from third countries.

"The practice of persecution of our citizens in third countries is absolutely unacceptable," Russian Foreign Ministry Human Rights Ombudsman Konstantin Dolgov said in an interview with the Izvestia newspaper.

"We will demand its cessation during our contacts with the new administration."

Dolgov also said that Moscow has suggested to Washington that it use the 1983 Strasbourg Convention on the transfer of convicted persons to return Russians to their country of citizenship.

In turn, Russia is ready to use the convention's mechanism in favor of American citizens

currently serving sentences in Russian prisons, he said.

Dolgov cited the cases of Viktor Bout and Konstantin Yaroshenko as examples of what he called "politically motivated" cases against Russian citizens.

Bout was arrested in Thailand in 2008 before being extradited to the United States in 2010, where he was convicted of terrorism charges in connection with supplying arms to the Colombian insurgent group FARC.

Konstantin Yaroshenko was a pilot who was also extradited to the United States after being arrested in Liberia. He was later convicted of smuggling shipments of cocaine to several destinations.

According to Dolgov, these cases are completely different from those of Russian citizens convicted of committing criminal offenses in the U.S. and vice versa.

He also claimed that the Yaroshenko case is a humanitarian issue, due to Yaroshenko's health problems.

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