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Russia: U.S. Has No 'Moral Right' to Demand Prisoners Release

June 19, 2018



Reuters

The U.S. has no "moral right" to demand that Russia free its political prisoners, the Russian Embassy said in the latest volley between the two superpowers.

The U.S. State Department called on Moscow this week to release the estimated 150 political and religious prisoners held in Russia. They include Oleg Sentsov, a Crimean filmmaker sentenced to 20 years on terrorism charges who announced an indefinite hunger strike during the World Cup; Chechen human rights activist Oyub Titiyev; and Jehovah's Witness Dennis Christensen, among others.

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Washington urged Russia to "cease its use of the legal system to suppress dissent and peaceful religious practice."

In response, the Russian Embassy in the United States wrote in a Facebook post on Monday: “Members of the American establishment have no moral right to blame Russia and demand that someone be released.”

The Russian embassy countered America's statements by pointing to two high-profile Russians convicted of terrorism and smuggling on U.S. soil, adding that “a relentless hunt on Russian citizens continues.”

Russia accused Washington of employing a “finely honed propaganda strategy of the fight for freedom of conscience, worship, democratic values," but only "when it needs to justify the structures recognized as extremist in other countries.”

“Terrorists can’t be ‘bad’ in the U.S. and ‘good’ ‘in Russia. We’ll never defeat terrorism that way,” the embassy said in a statement.

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