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Over 300 Foreign Journalists Demand Release of Jailed WSJ Reporter in Russia

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Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich in the Moscow City Court. **Moskva News Agency**

Over 300 foreign correspondents have called for the release of jailed Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich in an open letter to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov published Monday.

Among the signatories are journalists with decades of experience reporting from Russia, some having arrived in Moscow as far back as the early 1960s, while others have left the country in recent weeks.

In total, the signatories represent media outlets from 22 different countries. Among the signatories are also 40 former and current employees of The Moscow Times.

"We have all worked in Russia as foreign correspondents, some for a few months, others for decades. We are shocked and appalled by the arrest of our colleague Evan Gershkovich and the charges brought against him," the letter reads.

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Accused of espionage for the United States, Gershkovich was detained while reporting in the Ural Mountains city of Yekaterinburg on March 29. The journalist's defense team and his publication have denied all the allegations against him.

He is the first foreign journalist to be charged with espionage in Russia since the Cold War.

"The arrest sends a disturbing and dangerous signal about Russia's disregard for independent media and shows indifference to the fate of a young, talented and honest journalist," continues the letter.

"We call on the Russian authorities to drop these charges and immediately release Evan Gershkovich."

A Moscow city court on April 18 rejected an appeal against Gershkovich's arrest. The hearing was the first time he had been seen in public since his arrest.

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