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Russian Dissidents Plead With Canada to Accept Anti-War Activists Facing Deportation From U.S.

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A group of prominent exiled Russian opposition figures is urging Canada to offer asylum to hundreds of anti-war activists who they say face the risk of deportation from the United States to Russia, where they could be arrested and imprisoned for their political views.

In a letter to Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, the widow of Aleksei Navalny, Yulia Navalnaya, and the opposition activists Vladimir Kara-Murza and Ilya Yashin asked Ottawa to grant asylum to Russians currently subject to U.S. deportation orders, specifically those whose anti-war activities are well-documented.

The plea, reported on Wednesday by Canadian newspaper The Globe and Mail, argues that deporting these individuals to Russia "threatens to destroy the lives of many decent and innocent people."

Yashin told the newspaper that an estimated 1,000 Russians are currently seeking political asylum in the United States. The letter's authors hope Canada will accept "a few hundred" of the most vulnerable.

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At least one anti-Kremlin activist, Leonid Melekhin, was arrested in Russia on charges of justifying terrorism in social media posts after initial reports suggested U.S. immigration authorities deported him. Melekhin's court-appointed lawyer later claimed that he had returned voluntarily, "maybe because he had no chance of reaching the U.S. and living there."

Yashin said the letter to Carney reflects growing frustration among dissidents with the strict immigration policies of the Trump administration.

"I have been to the U.S. twice, knocked on different doors," Yashin was quoted as saying by The Globe and Mail. "The current administration in the White House simply does not want to hear us."

The Canadian government had not publicly responded to the letter as of Wednesday afternoon.

Kara-Murza, whom Canada granted honorary citizenship in June 2023 while he was imprisoned in Russia, plans to visit the country in October to discuss the proposal, Yashin said.

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