

October 30, 2025

On this International Day of Political Prisoners, we stand together to affirm a simple truth: no one should be imprisoned for exercising their fundamental rights or for peacefully expressing their beliefs. Yet around the world, there are an estimated one million political prisoners, who are unjustly detained for political reasons. These individuals — journalists, human rights defenders, democratic opposition leaders, religious leaders, artists, and ordinary citizens — represent the conscience of their societies. Their imprisonment is an assault not only on their freedom, but on the shared principles of human dignity and justice.

The International Day of Political Prisoners originated in the Soviet Union in 1974, when political prisoners collectively held a one-day hunger strike. Soviet prisoners of conscience repeated this protest every October 30, supported by demonstrations of solidarity in major cities. In response to Vladimir Putin's ongoing and deepening repression, Russian political prisoners rekindled the tradition in 2021. In the years since, it has become an international day of solidarity with political prisoners worldwide.

Political imprisonment corrodes the rule of law, silences dissent, undermines press freedom, and weakens the foundations of democracy. Authoritarian governments use it to suppress opposition, instill fear, and consolidate control. Each unjust detention sends a chilling message to others who seek to speak truth to power.

We, as organizations who advocate on behalf of those unjustly detained around the world, call on democratic governments to continue to make the release of political prisoners a global priority — to raise these cases consistently in bilateral and multilateral forums, to request information and specific actions be taken on the prisoners' behalf, to support accountability mechanisms, and to continue to provide support to organizations that advocate on behalf of those unjustly detained and provide legal and humanitarian assistance to them and their families. Solidarity with the unjustly detained must be sustained, coordinated, and visible.

We also stand in solidarity with the families, lawyers, and civil-society organizations who continue to advocate for freedom in the face of repression. Their courage reminds us that the defense of liberty is a collective responsibility.

On this day, and every day, we reaffirm our shared commitment to the universal right to freedom of thought, expression, association, and belief. The world's political prisoners must not be forgotten—and their freedom must remain a global cause.

Signed:

1. McCain Institute
2. Freedom House

3. Free Russia Foundation
4. National Endowment for Democracy
5. Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran
6. Al-Tahreer Association for Development (TAD)
7. Amnesty International
8. Center for Civil Liberties
9. Committee to Protect Journalists
10. Freedom Now
11. George W. Bush Institute
12. Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign
13. Human Rights Center Viasna
14. Human Rights Defense Center Memorial
15. Human Rights First
16. Human Rights Foundation
17. Human Rights Watch
18. International Republican Institute
19. James W. Foley Legacy Foundation
20. Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice
21. Oma Organization for Human Rights and Democracy Promotion
22. Organization for Community Civic Engagement
23. OVD-Info
24. Political and Governance Development Academy
25. Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP)
26. The 30 October Foundation
27. The Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights
28. Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation
29. World Liberty Congress