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Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova's answer to a media question on consular access to US citizen Evan Gershkovich detained on charges of espionage

Question: Will American diplomats have access to journalist Evan Gershkovich in accordance with Russia's commitments cited by the US?

Maria Zakharova: The hype raised by US officials and the Western media around Evan Gershkovich is an example of flagrant hypocrisy. Let's recall that he was caught red-handed and his journalistic status, as it transpires from a series of already established facts, was merely a cover for spying.

Demanding the immediate release of the American correspondent, the Joe Biden administration and Washington's propaganda machine have announced that he is being "held illegally." They are referring to the 1964 Soviet-US Consular Convention that they themselves treat like dirt and violate when Russian citizens are arrested or detained.

They do not mention that the US Embassy was informed in a timely manner about Gershkovich's arrest. Meanwhile, in similar cases, our diplomats are informed with delay or not at all, especially if the US Department of Justice or the FBI are in charge of these cases, which is a violation of the consular convention.

At any rate, access to our compatriots is not granted automatically but often after lengthy approvals. In the process, they cynically ignore the US commitments stemming from this convention.

As for representatives from the US Embassy in Moscow visiting Gershkovich, this issue is under review and will be resolved in due time in accordance with consular practices and Russian law. The status granted to him by US authorities is of no consequences in this case.

Appeals by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other US officials to their compatriots to "immediately leave Russia" are hypocritical and ambiguous. It is Washington that is hunting Russian citizens that live in the US

or in third countries or that are there temporarily because American secret services and law-enforcement bodies suspect them of something.

Russian citizens that have become an object of this “specific” kind of attention have no chance for a fair trial or protection from the US’s punitive quasi-justice. As a result, they land in prisons with maximum terms. The Foreign Ministry of Russia has every reason to advise our citizens to display more caution when planning trips abroad, especially to unfriendly countries.

I would like to emphasise that it is pointless and counterproductive to make any attempt to pressure Russian authorities or courts by insisting on some “special attitude” towards US citizens who violate Russian laws. It is time for Washington to realise that we will not tolerate any interference in our internal affairs and will act exclusively in line with our national interests.



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