



Will INTERPOL Reject Abusive Russian Requests Targeting Gary Kasparov?

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Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reports that on April 24, 2024, a Russian court issued an arrest warrant for Gary Kasparov, former world chess champion and a co-founder of the Free Russia Forum, on a charge of creating and leading a “terrorist” group. The court charged a number of other exiled Russian activists on the same basis.

On social media, Kasparov [confirmed](#) this report, noting that he and his colleagues had been “honored with criminal charges by Putin’s terror state.” He asked a pointed question to INTERPOL: “Are you still accepting Red Notices from Russia, and helping a police state persecute exiled dissidents?”

Russia has been widely recognized as the abusive INTERPOL member state par excellence. Russia’s pursuit of Bill Browder, the progenitor of Magnitsky legislation around the world, brought it deserved notoriety, but Russian harassment of Mr. Browder is only the tip of the iceberg. Russia’s abuses have been called out repeatedly, not least by the U.S. government.

For example, the latest edition of the State Department’s Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, published in April 2024, again [condemned](#) Russia for “attempt[ing] to misuse international law enforcement tools for politically motivated reprisal against specific individuals located outside the country.” Russia remains under the “heightened supervision and monitoring measures” [imposed](#) by INTERPOL in 2022 after Russia’s second invasion of Ukraine.

It is very unlikely – though not completely impossible – that Russia could publish a Red Notice through INTERPOL on Gary Kasparov. The nature of the process that INTERPOL’s Notices and Diffusions Task Force uses to review requests for Red Notices remains unclear, but the process does include a review of open source information.

Even a cursory review would hopefully make it clear that Mr. Kasparov, apart from being one of history’s greatest chess players, is a victim of Russian harassment. But INTERPOL takes every case individually, and as long as it is even considering



Russian requests, it is impossible even for Mr. Kasparov to be completely certain that a Red Notice will not be published naming him.

But Mr. Kasparov could also be targeted by a Wanted Person Diffusion (sometimes called a 'Red Diffusion'), or by a Blue Notice. Diffusions, a different kind of INTERPOL communication, can do anything that a Red Notice can, and diffusions are only reviewed by INTERPOL for abuse after transmission. Blue Notices, which can also be [used](#) in "relation to a criminal investigation," are not systematically reviewed at all.

Mr. Kasparov's colleagues face more serious risks. He is, to an extent, protected by his fame, but they are inevitably less renowned. It is possible that one (or more) of them would not appear in INTERPOL's review, and that INTERPOL would therefore have no basis on which to deny a Russian request for a Red Notice. Similarly, Mr. Kasparov's colleagues are even more vulnerable to diffusions or Blue Notices than he is.

The publicity surrounding these Russian arrest warrants will reduce, but not eliminate, these risks. It is here where INTERPOL's procedure for "pre-emptive" [submissions](#) could be useful to Mr. Kasparov and his colleagues: the more their names are publicly known, and the more they emphasize to INTERPOL in advance that they oppose any Russian publication naming them, the more secure from harassment through INTERPOL they will be.

This does not, of course, address the wider question rightly posed by Mr. Kasparov, of whether Russia, with its track record of abusing the INTERPOL system, should still be a member of that system at all. But as long as Russia remains an INTERPOL member state, there are ways for potential victims of Russian abuse to work through INTERPOL to protect themselves.