

Lawsuit Filed Against U.S. State Department Seeks Action for Imprisoned American

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New York, NY – A recently filed lawsuit—James Vincent Wilgus v. United States Department of State, et al., Case No. 24-cv-1384 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia—seeks action on the detention status of Jimmy Wilgus, an American who has served almost eight years in a Russian prison.

The Levinson Act requires the State Department to determine “as expeditiously as possible” whether a person held by a foreign government is wrongfully detained, and if they are wrongfully detained, work to bring them home. Jimmy Wilgus still awaits a review. His parents, James and Bella Wilgus, today issued the following statement:

“For nearly eight years now, our son, Jimmy Wilgus, has been imprisoned in IK-17, a Russian labor colony in Mordovia, on a twelve-and-a-half-year sentence. His imprisonment is based on a coerced confession to false charges that deprives him of his freedom, forces him to work in a sweatshop, and endangers his health.

“We hope each time a prisoner exchange happens that Jimmy will be party to it, but time and again, he is left behind. It’s clear to us that our government uses the arbitrary designation set forth in the Levinson Act as a means to cast favor on select imprisoned Americans while ignoring others.

“Our hopes are dashed each time we witness that an American officially labeled ‘wrongfully detained’ receives a fulsome effort, even if it requires a lopsided prisoner exchange, to gain the American’s freedom. Without the wrongfully detained designation, an imprisoned American like our son is all but ignored. Our country should not abandon its citizens in need, leaving them to fight injustice on their own.

“This lawsuit, as well as a suit filed by Judicial Watch earlier this year, challenges this process and asks the court to act immediately and make a determination whether Jimmy is ‘unlawfully or wrongly detained,’ as required by law.”

Free Jimmy Wilgus is an effort by family and friends who seek the release of Jimmy Wilgus from unjust Russian imprisonment. More information about Jimmy is available at www.freejimmywilgus.com.

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