
Bill Richardson Argues Tzvetan Vassilev is Bulgaria's "Magnitsky"

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In an op-ed for The Richardson Center for Global Engagement entitled "Tzvetan Vassilev: Bulgaria's Magnitsky?", top US diplomat Bill Richardson explains why Tzvetan Vassilev's victimization should be examined under the Global Magnitsky Act which allows the US government to sanction corrupt government officials implicated in human rights abuse.

'Tzvetan Vassilev's case returns a dismal, granular picture of autocratic rulers in a nominal democracy plagued by pervasive corruption and dominated by a Bulgarian mafia with its systematic abuses of state authority harking back to the fall of Communism,' emphasizes Richardson. The distinguished US diplomat clarifies that there are many similarities between the Magnitsky case, which motivated the US government to enact the Magnitsky Act, and Tzvetan Vassilev's case. 'State-directed practices of victimization of political opponents endure in countries plagued by comparable, widespread corruption…[like] Bulgaria,' clarifies Richardson.

Richardson also asserts: 'Vengeful political leaders in collusion with entrepreneurs who maneuvered the media and co-opted the courts imposed a classic Soviet-style corporate raiding scheme aimed to definitively silence [Vassilev's] voice.' He stresses that his Center for Global Engagement is honored to align itself with Tzvetan Vassilev's pursuit of justice against Bulgaria's corrupt system because Richardson himself has dedicated his diplomatic career to fighting such type of political repression and abuse.

The top diplomat explains the peculiar synergy between Bulgaria's prosecution and certain Bulgarian media and stresses that the charges against Vassilev are fabricated. In Richardson's opinion, the factual basis of Vassilev's victimization as well as of Bulgarian officials' serial misconduct should arouse the interest of US authorities. Notably, the Bulgarian government's attempts to violently suppress dissent and political opposition have thrived amidst the country's leadership's obstinate culture of corruption and passive attitude toward institutional reforms–a signal failure of commitment to protect basic human rights.

He emphasizes that two state officials played a 'decisive role' in Tzvetan Vassilev's case and appear eligible for sanctions under provisions of the Global Magnitsky Act:

-a media oligarch who doubles as a Member of Parliament and who is the 'strategist behind the

State-led war against Vassilev

- an executive prosecutor who has consistently abused his office to serve contingent political interests and leaked false charges to the press owned by the above-mentioned oligarch.

You can find the complete article here:
http://www.richardsondiplomacy.org/news/tzvetan-vassilev-bulgarias-magnitsky/

Biographical note:

Bill Richardson is a distinguished US diplomat who dedicated his career to fighting human rights abuse and corruption. He served as Governor of New Mexico, US Ambassador to the United Nations, and Secretary of Energy under President Bill Clinton. He has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize four times.