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July 23, 2013

His Excellency
Sergey I. Kislyak
Ambassador of the Russian Federation
2650 Wisconsin Avenue, Northwest
Washington, District of Columbia 20007

Dear Ambassador Kislyak:

I am deeply concerned about the recent conviction of Alexei Navalny on apparently politically motivated charges. In light of strong evidence that his trial was driven by political reasons and had serious legal shortcomings, Mr. Navalny's conviction is a disappointment and raises grave concerns about the rule of law in Russia.

I am aware of Mr. Navalny's work from his time studying in Connecticut as a Yale World Fellow in 2010. By all accounts, Mr. Navalny was a warm and open individual and a welcome contributor to Yale's intellectual life. I have heard from Yale students whose academic growth was greatly enhanced by their candid conversations with Mr. Navalny, who was always eager to share his views on politics, the law, and international relations. Additionally, Mr. Navalny's wife, Yulia, and their two young children were often seen around the New Haven community.

Freedom of the press and the ability to speak openly about political views are crucial elements of a democratic society. Sadly, Mr. Navalny's conviction seems to indicate a lack of political freedom in Russia. I am particularly concerned by statements by the prosecution seeming to indicate that Mr. Navalny was charged due to his outspoken opposition of the Putin administration. Additionally, I am gravely concerned by reports that defense lawyers were not allowed to cross-examine a key prosecution witness and that the judge barred the defense from calling many of its witnesses.

If Mr. Navalny's conviction is not reversed upon appeal, it will raise further questions regarding the state of the rule of law in Russia. I ask you to urge Russian authorities to immediately reconsider their decisions to target members of the political opposition and work to restore faith in the legal system. It is in the best interest of democracy not to let Mr. Navalny's conviction stand.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate