

**Statement for the Record Regarding Importance of
Reauthorizing Global Magnitsky Act**

**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing,
“The Global Magnitsky Human Rights
Accountability Act: Taking Stock”**

Wednesday, March 24, 2021 - 12:30 pm

Submitted by Michael J. Abramowitz
President, Freedom House

I am pleased to submit on behalf of Freedom House this statement of support for reauthorization of the *Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act* (22 U.S.C. 2656 note), which authorizes visa bans and asset freezes for human rights abusers and corrupt officials. We believe this law should be reauthorized, should not contain a sunset, should codify Executive Order 13818 which allows sanctions to be imposed for serious human rights abuse rather than the more narrow definition of gross violations of human rights, and should be expanded to allow for the imposition of targeted sanctions on family members of individuals engaging in corruption or human rights abuse.

Though targeted sanctions are but one foreign policy tool of many and should be part of a comprehensive US government strategy for addressing corruption and human rights abuses, *Global Magnitsky Act* (GloMag) sanctions have served as one of the most powerful foreign policy tools created in recent memory. Thanks to the leadership of the Lantos Commission co-chairs Rep. Jim McGovern and Rep. Chris Smith, as well as Senator Ben Cardin and the late Senator John McCain, who authored this groundbreaking legislation, GloMag enjoys broad bipartisan support and is widely viewed as one of the United States' most effective methods for addressing human rights abuses and corruption – two key drivers of instability globally.

Freedom House has been honored to work in coalition with Human Rights First, The Sentry, and dozens of other nongovernmental organizations to press the United States government to impose sanctions on abusers and corrupt officials. We have collectively documented numerous firsthand accounts from human rights activists around the world about the law's powerful deterrent and accountability effects on corrupt activity and human rights abuses. Authoritarian leaders have taken notice. The law's novel provision requiring the consideration of information submitted by international human rights organizations has empowered civil society to play a key role in holding kleptocrats and abusive actors to account, helping to energize and organize collaborative efforts in even the most repressive of environments.

To date, targeted sanctions have been imposed on 248 human rights violators, corrupt actors, and associated entities in 34 countries. This remarkable success is a testament to unprecedented cooperation between Congress, the Executive Branch, and civil society, and a demonstration of a shared conviction about the law's utility.

Freedom House has also been honored to be joined by this same coalition to partner with Members of Congress, many of whom sit on this Commission, to secure congressional appropriations for implementation and enforcement of GloMag sanctions.

We thank Congress, and most especially GloMag's authors and cosponsors, for their work to bring accountability for human rights abuses and acts of corruption around the world. We urge swift reauthorization of this law with the modifications outlined above, and we look forward to continuing to partner with Congress, the Executive Branch, and other NGOs to build on the success of this important foreign policy tool.