

Testimony to the Joint Committee on Justice of the Irish Parliament

by William Browder, Leader of the Global Magnitsky Justice Movement

15 June 2022

Dear members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Joint Committee on Justice.

My name is William Browder, and I am the leader of the Global Magnitsky Justice movement.

For the last 12 years, since the murder of my lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, I've been on a mission to get human rights sanctions laws adopted in his name, designed to freeze the assets and ban the visas of human rights violators and high-level kleptocrats around the world.

In that time the United States, Canada, the UK, the European Union, Australia, Norway, and a number of other countries have passed their own versions of the Magnitsky Act.

This initiative has evolved into one of the most powerful tools for fighting human rights abuse.

Before this initiative, sanctions were imposed against countries and they were broad and blunt. When you sanction the country, often you sanction the people who are the victims and the perpetrators, and the leaders of those countries ended up enjoying impunity.

The advantage of the Magnitsky Act is that instead of going after broad groups of people we targeted specific individuals who were personally involved in human rights abuse.

While Europe has adopted an EU Magnitsky Act, there are a few big failings which I believe require Ireland to have its own Magnitsky Act.

The first and foremost is that the unanimity requirement for the EU foreign policy means that any country can block sanctions for any reason. There may have been good reasons to put in place a unanimity requirement in the past, however what has happened in practice is that some EU member states have vetoed actions which Putin found offensive.

This meant that all other countries in the European Union were effectively subject to a veto.

In the case of the torture and murder of Sergei Magnitsky, there have been serious negative consequence of this approach.

The killers of Sergei Magnitsky are sanctioned in the United States, Canada, UK and Australia. But because of Hungary's intervention, they are not sanctioned in the EU.

What this means is that the people who were involved in the persecution and death of Sergei Magnitsky can regularly travel to Ireland, use your banking system, buy property without any fear of interference or other problems.

I am certain that the Irish public and every member of this Committee wouldn't be happy with that situation.

And I am certain that Ireland should have its own sovereignty when it comes to these types of decisions.

I am not suggesting veering away from the EU foreign policy in most cases, but I am saying that the Magnitsky Law should be a part of your sanctions policy in specific cases.

Thank you for your attention.