

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 3, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to urge greater attention to the timely and safe release and return of American citizen Mark Frerichs, who was abducted earlier this year in Afghanistan. While recognizing the complexities of any negotiated resolution to the conflict in Afghanistan, we are deeply concerned that a rushed withdrawal agreement may overlook the need to make sure all American hostages are first released. Recent reports that Russia may have offered bounties on Americans in Afghanistan only further increase the urgency on this matter.

Mr. Frerichs, originally from Illinois and a veteran of the U.S. Navy, has spent nearly ten years living in and working as an independent contractor in Afghanistan. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Mr. Frerichs was abducted on or around January 31, 2020, in Kabul, and media reports indicate that he is likely being held captive by the Haqqani network, a group closely aligned with the Taliban. While a Taliban spokesperson has reportedly claimed that Mr. Frerichs is not being held by them or any associated groups, serious questions remain, particularly given the timing of his disappearance around ongoing peace talks in Afghanistan.

The Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation at the State Department Zalmay Khalilzad has made clear that he continues to press Taliban leaders on the release of Mr. Frerichs. And in May, the FBI pursued a number of campaigns seeking information on his case. We hope these efforts bear fruit, but worry they may not be sufficient.

Ultimately, Mr. Frerichs's swift and safe return, and that of any other Americans abducted, must be a top priority for our government amid the larger peace process in Afghanistan and we welcome the opportunity to help on this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator