

Texas families demand the government act to win release of relatives detained, held captive overseas

The group of families called on the Biden administration to push for the release of their family members detained and imprisoned in other countries.



Joey Reed, a former Marine and longtime firefighter, has been tirelessly campaigning for his son's release for nearly two years. Trevor Reed was arrested in Moscow in 2019 and is serving a nine-year prison term. (Raga Justin)

By [Emily Caldwell](#)

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Update: Updated at 10:45 am Thursday with new information.

WASHINGTON — Multiple Texas families, including relatives of former Marine and Fort Worth native Trevor Reed, gathered outside the White House on Tuesday to call on the Biden administration to bring their relatives and others home from detainment in Russia, Venezuela, Rwanda, Syria and elsewhere.

Joey and Paula Reed, Trevor Reed's parents, said it's been over 150 days since they were allowed to speak with their son in Russia. [Trevor Reed was arrested in Moscow in August 2019 after a drunken altercation at a party](#) and is serving a nine-year prison term on assault charges the U.S. ambassador to Russia has lambasted as "absurd."

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U.S. officials have said both Reed and Paul Whelan, another former Marine imprisoned in Russia, [are serving time for trumped-up charges](#), most likely pretexts for holding them as bargaining chips in hopes of trading for the release of Russian spies. Last month, [Reed went on a hunger strike to protest his detention and the violation of his rights](#).

"He's thin, he has a consistent cough ever since he had COVID," his father said. "We think he has some sort of kidney problems. And he has, you know, ongoing back pain and he has migraines, and he receives no medication whatsoever."

The Reeds said the demonstration outside the White House was organized by [the Amer Fakhoury Foundation, an advocacy organization](#) dedicated to fighting for victims of illegal detention and torture.

They said they're also meeting with government officials and lawmakers while in Washington, including Texas Rep. August Pfluger, R-San Angelo, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., and Texas Sen. John Cornyn, who's

actively pushed for the release of detained Texans abroad. The Reeds met with Cornyn on Wednesday.



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Ultimately, Joey Reed said, their main goal is to meet with President Joe Biden — especially considering, Paula Reed said, that [Trevor had served as](#)

[a Marine presidential guard and provided security at Camp](#)

[David](#) when President Barack Obama and then-Vice President Biden were there.

“The man who’s in charge of all foreign affairs is the president of the United States, he’s the one who makes that decision,” Joey Reed said. “We would love to speak to the boss of the bosses.”

The Reeds weren’t the only Texans demonstrating outside the White House on Tuesday. Two other families from Texas also were there advocating for the release of family members detained overseas.

Anaïse and Carine Kanimba said Rwandan authorities are detaining their father, Paul Rusesabagina — the [Hotel Rwanda](#) hero and [recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom](#) — under false charges. The family [has lived in San Antonio since 2009](#) and Rusesabagina, [originally from Rwanda, is a permanent U.S. resident](#).

Rusesabagina was [arrested in August of last year on charges that include terrorism, arson and murder](#). The Kanimbas said the charges are bogus and they believe their father is in prison because he was a vocal opponent of the government of Rwanda’s long-serving president, Paul Kagame.

“We believe that the United States can actually find a solution to this situation, if they want to make it happen,” Anaïse Kanimba said.

The sisters thanked Cornyn and U.S. Rep. Joaquin Castro, D-San Antonio, in particular for [their efforts to advocate for Rusesabagina’s release](#).

Also outside the White House was Austinite Frank Denman, who said his son, former Green Beret Luke Denman, has been held illegally in Venezuela with former Green Beret and fellow Texan Airan Berry for approximately a year and a half.

In August 2020, [Denman and Berry were sentenced to 20 years in prison](#) for their part in [a failed beach attack](#) aimed at overthrowing Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

“Our first effort was to get our government to recognize that our people were not lawfully detained,” Denman said. “Until very recently, there’s been zero action on the part of the State Department.”

The State Department does appear to be revisiting the case of abducted Texan journalist Austin Tice, however. [Tice's mother is set to meet with national security adviser Jake Sullivan on Friday](#), *CBS News* reported.

Tice, who worked for multiple major media outlets, including *The Washington Post* and *CBS News*, [was kidnapped while covering the Syrian civil war](#) on Aug. 14, 2012.



[Emily Caldwell](#). Emily Caldwell is covering politics in Washington for The Dallas Morning News. She is from College Station, Texas, and graduated from The University of Texas at Austin in May with degrees in journalism and Latin American studies. She spent a number of years at The Daily Texan, UT's student newspaper, and was the editor-in-chief this past year.

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