



Putin Grants Snowden Russian Citizenship

Description

RUSSIA: Snowden has been living in Russia since 2013 after he was stripped of his American passport by the United States.

On September 26, Russia's President Vladimir Putin has officially granted Russian citizenship to former NSA contractor and whistleblower Edward Snowden.

"In accordance with paragraph 'a' of Article 89 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, I decide: to accept the following persons in the citizenship of the Russian Federation: Edward Joseph Snowden, born June 21, 1983, in the United States of America," says a decree signed by Putin.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has confirmed that Russian citizenship was granted to Snowden at the latter's request.

Snowden's Russian lawyer Anatoly Kucherena also pointed out that, since his client did not serve in the Russian Army, he should not be drafted as part of the ongoing partial mobilization in the country.

According to Kucherena, Snowden's wife is also expected to apply for Russian citizenship.

The White House referred comment on Snowden's citizenship issue to the US Justice Department.

"Since, I believe, there have been criminal charges brought against him, we would point you to the Department of Justice for any specifics on this," said White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre.

Meanwhile, the US Department of State insisted that Snowden should return to the United States to "face justice".

“Our position has not changed. Mr. Snowden should return to the United States where he should face justice as any other American citizen would,” State Department spokesman Ned Price said during a press briefing on Monday.

Snowden has been living in Russia since 2013, after seeking asylum there when the United States stripped him of his passport. He earned the US government’s ire by exposing the extent of surveillance programs run by the NSA and the Five Eyes intelligence alliance.

In June 2013, Snowden was charged by the US Justice Department with violating the Espionage Act of 1917 and government property theft after he leaked classified documents to journalists.

With his passport revoked while he was heading to South America, Snowden ended up being stuck in Moscow’s Sheremetyevo International Airport for about a month, until Russian government granted him asylum and, eventually, a residency permit.

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Date Created

09/27/2022