
State Department Pleads Fifth When Asked About American Detained in Ukraine



BY SPACE WORM

SUNDAY, MAY 28, 2023 - 12:38

American YouTuber and columnist Gonzalo Lira was arrested in Ukraine at the start of May because he “publicly justified” the Russian invasion, according to a [press release](#) by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). The statement says that Lira “has the citizenship of one of the countries of Latin America” **but omits that he is also [California-born U.S. citizen](#).**

Lira is a resident of Kharkiv, Ukraine and was an outspoken critic of the nation’s President Volodymyr Zelensky. Lira has written financial columns, published in Business Insider and even here at [ZeroHedge](#). His Twitter [account](#) is still up, and a brief look reveals that — whether you agree with him or not on all stances — his opinions are largely in line with much of the American right. The SBU claimed to have confiscated “mobile phones and a computer with evidence of illegal activity” from Lira’s apartment but no such evidence was made public.

Lira has been charged under sections 2 and 3 of [Article 436-2](#) of Ukraine’s [criminal code](#), which was augmented at the start of the invasion **to criminalize the “distribution of materials” that justify Russia’s actions in Ukraine going back to 2014**. The law specifically outlaws portraying any military dispute “financed by [the] Russian Federation” in Ukraine as an “internal civil conflict,” a law [The New York Times](#) and [Wired Magazine](#) are in violation of.

The Ukrainian government has frequently claimed that the violent conflicts in the Donbas region — which killed over 10,000 people between 2014 and 2020 — were financed and armed by the Russians. However, a former NATO official in charge of investigating arms shipments into the Donbas from 2014 to 2018 [found](#) that “there were no deliveries of weapons and military equipment from Russia” and instead that most arms were smuggled by defecting Ukrainian soldiers. This official could have been imprisoned under Article 436-2 as well.

Lira faces up to 13 years in prison if he is convicted of both charges.

Of course, American journalists are not as indignant over Lira’s arrest as they are over that of Evan Gershkovich, the WSJ reporter being detained in Russia. Federal Reserve minion Nick Timairos did not change his Twitter profile to signal “solidarity” with Lira.



Biden did not praise Lira's "absolute courage" for speaking against the regime which he lived under nor does it appear the administration has any intent of negotiating his release, [two actions](#) it has taken on behalf of Gershkovich.

Daily Beast was the sole mainstream outlet to [cover](#) Lira and only did so to slander him.

Each of these individuals was imprisoned for speech and speech alone. Holding a principle in favor of freedom of expression would require standing up for these writers equally. Given the leverage we have over Ukraine, securing the release of Lira would not take so much as a phone call.

Stil, when asked about whether the Biden State Department was aware of Lira's arrest and if they are working to get him freed, **newly appointed spokesperson Mathew Miller said the department is aware of the matter but went no further:**