
Russian Government Arbitrarily Denying Entry To Christian Workers

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Russian President

Vladimir Putin

MURRIETA, CA – President Vladimir Putin, hosting the G8's first summit in Russia, hopes to use the meeting to showcase his country's new assertive global posture, but at the same time may be closing the doors to religious freedom in Russia.

John Livoti, Eastern European Outreach (EEO) New England Representative and team leader for seven years, was denied entry into Russia on this mission trip this month.

Livoti arrived at Moscow's Domodedovo airport on July 4th with a valid entry visa in his passport issued by the Russian Embassy in Washington D.C.

Despite this fact, and with no explanation whatsoever, Russian authorities denied Livoti entrance into the country.

Livoti was accompanied by a team of 14 people from New England who continued on through customs with no problem. Only Livoti was singled out and placed in a holding area. The team was met a Russian EEO translator who tried to assist Livoti and discover the reason for his detention.

The translator was turned away by Russian authorities while Livoti was placed under administrative arrest.

EEO Executive Director Jeff Thompson said, “Many Evangelical groups are facing new challenges in Russia. The harsh requirements of Russia’s 1997 Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations law are now being enforced at the local level, and the new Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) law enables authorities to closely monitor religious activities.”

Livoti's wife Janet was also denied entrance, but she was denied a visa several months ago while still in America. Along with a another team member, David Sawyer, also from Massachusetts, a total of four people from John's team were denied Russian visas.

Janet Livoti, David Sawyer and his daughter Kelly all decided to work at the EEO camp in Kiev, Ukraine after they were

denied visas to Russia.

John, however, was not denied and actually had a valid visa issued to him. Nevertheless, the Russians arbitrarily put him on a flight back to London that same night after several tense hours in a holding cell at the airport. John is back in the USA now awaiting the return of his team from Russia and his wife from Ukraine.

For many years now, John and Janet Livoti have led teams each summer to Yoshkar-ola, Russia to work with orphans at Camp Cooperator in the Mari-el Republic. They have had no political involvement and have strived to help the children there. No reasons were given for the visa denials, and Russian authorities do not respond to requests for more information.