

# NO JUSTICE WITHOUT TRANSPARENCY

## CONGRESS MUST PASS THE “JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF KLEPTOCRACY ACT”

### SUMMARY

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Fine art, palaces, private jets, a major [Hollywood movie](#)—even [Michael Jackson’s glove](#). These are just a few of the sensational items paid for with the billions stolen over the years by kleptocrats: corrupt leaders who steal public funds. But kleptocracy isn’t just a splashy spectacle. It’s a crime with very real, and suffering, victims. The money that corrupt leaders steal from their people could have otherwise gone to life-saving healthcare, public education, or critical infrastructure in their countries.

Every year, U.S. law enforcement seizes billions of stolen dollars and assets from corrupt leaders. When funds

are recovered, the chance for justice is real, and worth fighting for.

To bring justice to the victims of kleptocracy, stolen money needs to be sent back to its country of origin, but it can’t just be given back to corrupt governments. Finding ways to return stolen funds presents a challenge, often causing delays and compounding the harm caused by the initial theft. The Justice for Victims of Kleptocracy (JVOK) Act aims to live up to its name by putting in place a key transparency measure that will put pressure on law enforcement to swiftly return funds to victims, helping to repair the wounds of kleptocracy.

### KLEPTOCRATS INFLICT REAL HARM

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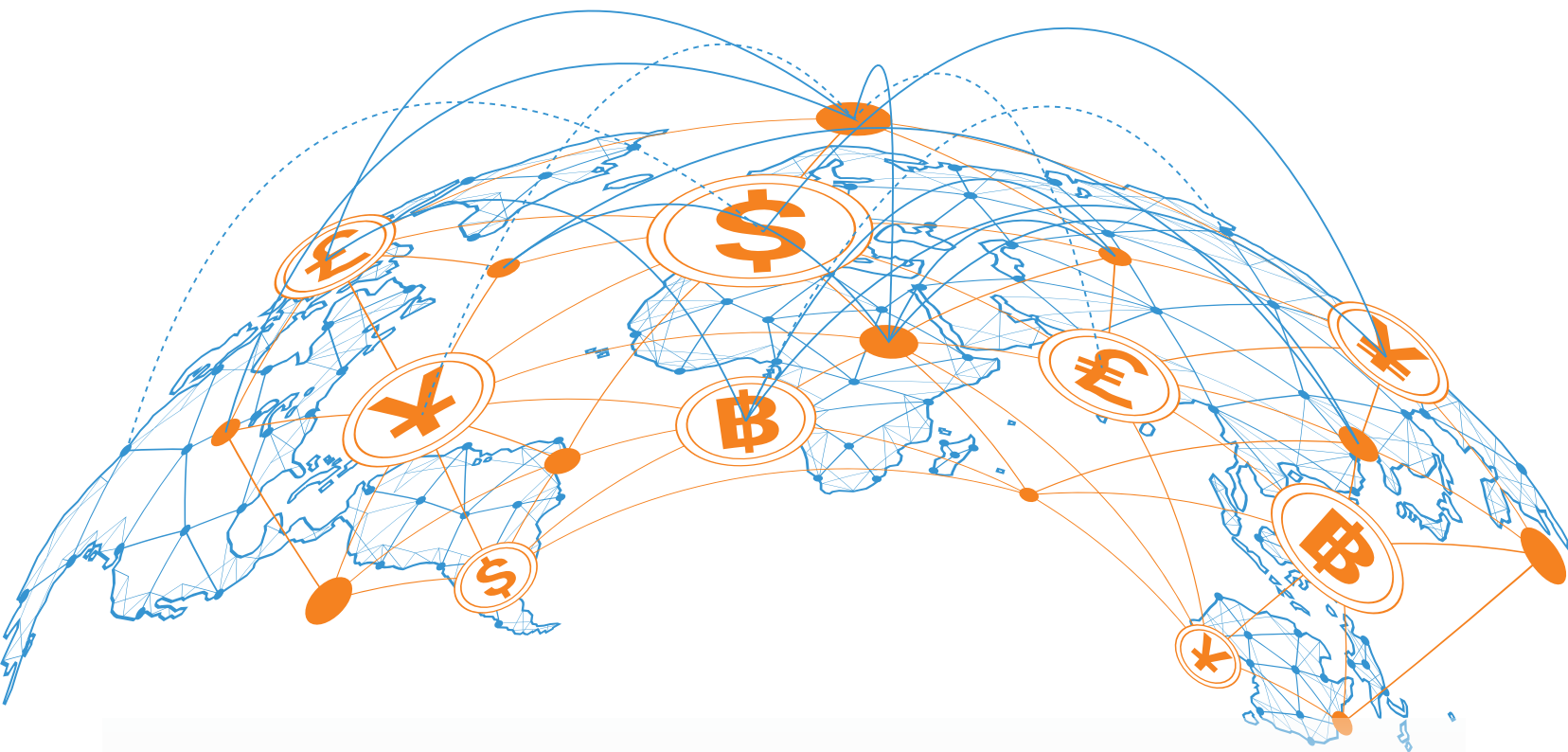
During his time in government, former Treasurer of **Venezuela** Alejandro Andrade demanded [\\$1 billion in bribes](#) in exchange for access to the country’s currency markets. He pled guilty to U.S. bribery charges in 2017, and the U.S. government seized Andrade’s ill-gotten money and assets, which he’d spent on luxury real estate, racehorses, and private jets in Florida. An anonymous Venezuelan party sued the U.S. government to force it to return the money to Venezuela. All this while Venezuela faced [runaway inflation and a food crisis](#) with a third of Venezuelans reporting eating just two meals or fewer a day in 2016.



Criminal investigations in multiple countries linked Gulnara Karimova, daughter of the former president of **Uzbekistan**, to a [\\$1.3 billion bribery scheme](#). The U.S. Justice Department indicted Karimova in 2019, and some \$650 million of her assets were frozen as a result. The Uzbek government considers itself the rightful owner of the money, while anticorruption activists and experts point out that top Uzbek officials were likely at least aware of, if not complicit, in the scheme. Meanwhile, [Uzbekistan struggles to fund basic infrastructure](#).



Between 2009 and 2015, a fund created by the **Malaysian** government to promote rural economic development [misappropriated more than \\$3.5 billion](#). The U.S. Department of Justice, through its Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative, has seized \$1.2 billion of the money that was stolen and then laundered through the United States. As of 2021, just \$630 million has been returned to the Malaysian people.



## HOW TRANSPARENCY HELPS VICTIMS OF KLEPTOCRACY

Money stolen from foreign governments by corrupt leaders and then recovered by U.S. law enforcement is not currently tracked in a uniform, public database, so it's difficult to tell how much money has been recovered, from whom, and how long it's been held by the United States.

JVOK would help deliver justice to the victims of kleptocracy by establishing a centralized, public database to track recovered funds. Having all the information about recovered funds in one place creates transparency around how much money there is, and who it really belongs to. Transparency attracts attention, creating a sense of urgency for the U.S. government to return funds quickly to aid organizations or other appropriate recipients who will use the money to benefit the victims of kleptocracy.

Winning justice for the victims of kleptocracy is challenging, but necessary. The harm caused by the theft of public funds is real, and the hurt isn't fully healed by the bringing of criminal charges alone, which may or may not translate into real consequences for corrupt leaders in their own countries. For justice to prevail, money must be returned to victims. JVOK creates the transparency needed to deliver justice to the victims of kleptocracy.