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Charly Binney

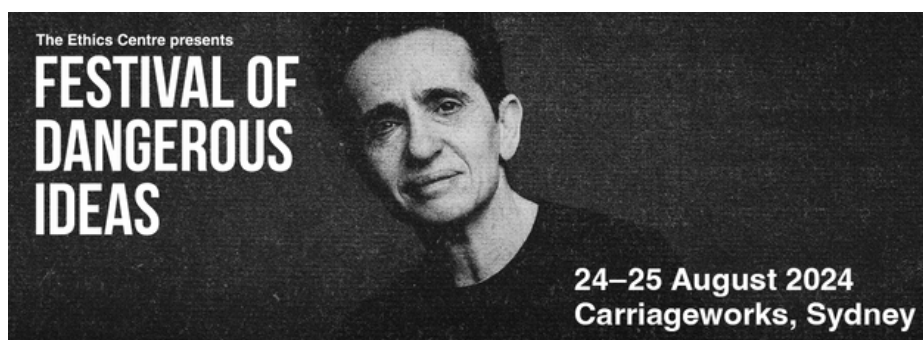
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FODI Media Centre**MEDIA RELEASE // TUESDAY 20 AUGUST 2024****JOURNALIST MASHA GESSEN'S VISA TO ENTER AUSTRALIA GRANTED**

Masha Gessen's delayed Australian visa application has now been granted following further assessment by the Department of Home Affairs. The Russian-American activist and journalist will now be free to travel to Sydney for speaking engagements with the Festival of Dangerous Ideas.

The renowned international reporter and prominent critic of Vladimir Putin experienced a delay to their visa application following requests for additional information by the Australian government after the author's open declaration of their sham 'conviction', in absentia, by the same Russian courts that condemned the late political prisoner, Alexei Navalny. Home Affairs has now made a principled decision to waive those requirements.

Event hosts, the Festival of Dangerous Ideas and Masha's supporters, have expressed their appreciation to the Department of Home Affairs for ultimately resolving this issue in a just and proper manner.

The Festival of Dangerous Ideas is presented by The Ethics Centre. Executive Director of The Ethics Centre Simon Longstaff said of the decision:

"We are grateful to the Australian government for taking into account our submissions and working tirelessly towards this welcome outcome. The Department of Home Affairs has acted on an important principle: that Masha's conviction by the Russian state is unjust. Masha Gessen has only ever acted according to values and principles that Australians generally profess. A sensible rule, designed to screen people who have committed genuinely criminal acts, was at risk of being misapplied in this case. The approval of Masha's visa demonstrates Australia's principled opposition to the kind of political oppression at work in Vladimir Putin's Russia. It's good to live in a country and under a government that ultimately chooses to do what is right."

Festival of Dangerous Ideas Director Danielle Harvey commented:

"We are excited to welcome Masha Gessen back to Sydney. Their insights and contributions are highly anticipated at the festival. Masha's presence, in-person, at our events will spark meaningful discussion on the critical issues of our times. They are speaking about democracy, creeping authoritarianism and the rewriting of historical conflicts. We appreciate the support of all involved in ensuring Masha's dangerous ideas can be heard 'live and clear' by Sydney audiences."

More information will be sent to ticket holders shortly.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

- The Festival of Dangerous Ideas 2024 runs from 24-25 August at Carriageworks, Sydney
- The 2024 program features 87 speakers and artists, including 16 international guests, appearing in 88 sessions
- The theme of the 2024 event is *Sanctuary*
- Tickets are available at festivalofdangerousideas.com
- The Festival of Dangerous Ideas is presented by The Ethics Centre
- The Festival of Dangerous Ideas [MEDIA CENTRE](#)

Masha Gessen bio:

Masha Gessen is an opinion columnist for *The New York Times* and a Distinguished Professor at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at the City University of New York. They have written extensively on The Russian-Ukrainian war, Israel/Palestine, Vladimir Putin, and Donald Trump. They have won numerous awards, including the George Polk Award, the Hannah Arendt Prize for Political Thinking, and the National Book Award. Their books include *Surviving Autocracy* and *The Future Is History: How Totalitarianism Reclaimed Russia*.

About the Festival of Dangerous Ideas

Festival of Dangerous Ideas (FODI to its fans) is bold, audacious and thought provoking. The home-grown festival launched in 2009 to give Sydney audiences access to high quality thought leaders, culture creators and radical artists from all over the world. With its unique offering, FODI quickly secured acclaim, becoming a globally respected cultural asset that has helped define Sydney as the 'smart capital' of Australia.

FODI values original thought. Driven by ideas, not shock value, FODI platforms credentialed people to share and exchange – not restricted by form, language, perspective or geography. FODI's curation is renowned for being at the zeitgeist of ideas, providing access to issues we will soon be facing. It facilitates the tackling of wicked problems from different angles and makes space for daring and adventurous conversation.

The 2020 festival was presented digitally due to COVID travel bans, returning in 2022 and 2024 with a fully in person festival, alongside selected sessions available for streaming.