

Edward Snowden applies for Russian citizenship for sake of future son

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Moscow, November 2 (RHC)-- U.S. whistleblower Edward Snowden and his wife are applying for Russian citizenship in order not to be separated from their future son in an era of pandemics and closed borders, he said on Monday.

Snowden's wife, Lindsay, is expecting a child in late December, the Interfax news agency cited Anatoly Kucherena, his Russian lawyer, as saying. Snowden, 37, fled the U.S. and was given asylum in Russia after leaking secret files in 2013 that revealed vast domestic and international surveillance operations carried out by the US National Security Agency where he was a contractor.

U.S. authorities have for years wanted Snowden returned to the U.S. to face a criminal trial on espionage charges brought in 2013. "After years of separation from our parents, my wife and I have no desire to be

separated from our son. That's why, in this era of pandemics and closed borders, we're applying for dual U.S.-Russian citizenship," Snowden wrote on Twitter.

"Lindsay and I will remain Americans, raising our son with all the values of the America we love, including the freedom to speak his mind. And I look forward to the day I can return to the States, so the whole family can be reunited. Our greatest wish is that, wherever our son lives, he feels at home."

Russia has already granted Snowden permanent residency rights, his lawyer said last month, a vital step towards Russian citizenship. Snowden is benefiting from an immigration reform signed into law by Vladimir Putin in April that allows foreigners to receive a Russian passport without renouncing other citizenships.

Anatoly Kucherena, a lawyer for Snowden, told Interfax: "Edward has asked me to assist in filing his application for Russian citizenship." The reason was to hold the same citizenship as his son, he said.

"Edward has told me that their baby is expected to be born in December; considering that the baby will be entitled to Russian citizenship by the birthright, he also wants to be a citizen of Russia," Kucherena said, according to Interfax.

Snowden keeps a low profile in Russia, speaking only in general terms about his living arrangements. He has denied he is under pressure from the country's security services or has made any deal to receive asylum. He has praised the country's natural beauty and the warmth of its people, while using social media to criticise government policy from time to time.

Snowden's wife announced the pregnancy last week in a photograph posted to Instagram. "A long time in the making," she wrote. "Our greatest collaboration coming soon."

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