



Gonzalo Lira Sr.—Father of “Assassinated” American Journalist—Demands Biden Be Held Accountable

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Mr. Lira, first of all, condolences on the death of your son. I know this is something that is very difficult to have to navigate, but I also very much appreciate your taking the time to talk to us so we can bring some more journalistic attention to what has happened here.

Gonzalo Lira Sr. (GL): Thank you so much, Glenn. It's my pleasure being with you. And my intention for this interview is, I wish the world would become aware of what happened to my son. My son was assassinated.

GG: Let's get into it step by step. Just so that people can kind of follow along, because there are some people who don't know. So I want to just kind of lay the foundation for everything. I have seen as I've been talking about this case, and other people have been talking about this case, some of the most rabid supporters of Ukraine who peddled disinformation all the time, actually calling the doubt whether or not your son even died in a Ukrainian prison, whether he's still in a Ukrainian prison, whether he's still alive. How did you find out about the death of your son? And what is it that you learned about the circumstances of his death when you were told that this has happened?

GL: Well, the process was very simple. Finally, my son arrived at the hospital on January the 4th because he had double pneumonia, he had pneumothorax, and he had a heavy case, an acute case of oedema. He could not breathe. He would lose consciousness if he spoke for more than two minutes. This is a small note that he wrote to his sister, my daughter. Now, once he arrived in that hospital, the following week he died. How do we know? The director of this Ukrainian hospital in the city of Kharkiv called the US embassy and informed them that my son Gonzalo had died. The official from the US embassy called my daughter and told her about my son's death. And this was on January the 12th. And that's how I heard of my son's death in a hospital, sent by the jailers that he had been for eight months incommunicado in the city of Kharkiv. My son did not have an attorney other than a court appointed attorney

that did not speak any English. And my son's charges were that he was a pro-Russian propagandist because as a blogger reporter, he had over 300 subscribers in the various websites that he had and he told them the reasons for Russia invading Ukraine. He explained the why, and he ventured in his analysis that Ukraine would never win a war against Russia, no matter what help they receive from the USA or the NATO countries.

GG: And just to be clear, your son was a citizen, both of Chile and the United States. So he was an American citizen at the time that he was...

GL: If I may?

GG: Yeah. Go ahead.

GL: ...give you some details. Gonzalo was born in Burbank in the city of Los Angeles in 1968 while I was doing my postgraduate work in economics. He was born in the USA and he was brought up in the USA up until he was 11 years old. At that time we moved to Santiago, Chile, where he finished his high school in Santiago to go back to the USA, to Dartmouth college in New Hampshire. After graduating from Dartmouth he stayed in the USA. He published a book called *Counterparts*, published by Putnam Editorial in New York, and stayed in the USA for many years. He was an American citizen, there is no doubt about it. Now, while he came to Chile, as a son of a Chilean, as an aside, Gleen, at the beginning he was a wetback because his papers, the tourist papers expired; his and his sister. So we had to make all the arrangements and obviously they gave them Chilean nationality. And that's why he had dual nationality.

GG: Right.

GL: But he was born in the USA.

GG: So when and obviously anyone born in the United States receives automatic lifelong citizenship, an American passport and all of that in the full rights of all American citizens under the Constitution. Now, he was 55 years old when he died, which obviously is very young, especially to die of pneumonia. Usually a 55 year old man in generally good health will be able to combat pneumonia if it's treated properly with just the basic minimum treatment. Did your son have any serious or chronic health problems before his problems in Ukraine with the law began?

GL: My son had a mild case of heart disease, the coronary arteries. He never had a heart stroke, by the way. When he was detained on May the 1st, Gonzalo was in totally normal health. He was physically apt; he had never been sick in a hospital. And Gonzalo again, let me repeat, he was in excellent health. Now, he was a heavy smoker, though. But he had no case of any severe illness.

GG: Now, when your daughter was told by the US embassy that the hospital had told them that your son had died after that, at any point, did anyone provide anything in writing to you?

Did you ever learn any more information from the United States consulate about the circumstances of his death?

GL: No, none whatsoever. As a matter of fact, if I may explain, since day one, when my son was detained, according to the embassy protocol around the world, an official of the embassy has to go and speak to the detained American citizen in a country overseas immediately. Offering him legal assistance, immediately. Offering them communication with the family. None of those things the US embassy did. Because my son was detained. Glenn, due to Biden giving the green light. I am not the first one to say it in these words; someone else said it before. Senile Biden gave the green light to dictate to Zelensky to detain my son. And let me tell you why. My son was detained for the first time by the SBO, which is the local Gestapo, in the year 2022. On April the 5th through April the 22nd, that full week he was detained, then released without any legal charge. No charges on him. But of course, those savages stole all his electronic equipment, stole money from him and he came back to an apartment that had been ransacked. He recovered all of his equipment and continued with the same language, criticising bloody, sinister dictator Zelensky and the way the war was being carried out, venturing on March 22nd, a month after the invasion, that Ukraine would never win a war against Russia. That all of the economic sanctions would backfire in the USA and it would hurt the economies of Europe and it would hurt the economy of the USA. If you see the economic numbers for Russia, they have been growing during the war. Now, he continued the same language, as I said before, criticising the dictator Zelensky in Ukraine. But hear me out on this one. After a full year after being detained and released those seven days, Gonzalo for the first time put a video criticising senile Biden, as he referred to President Biden and stupid Kamala Harris, as he referred to the vice president because he said I have never seen a woman so stupid as Kamala Harris. He went on to criticise Biden on the 27th of April in the year 2023. Four days later Gonzalo is detained by machine gun soldiers in mass. At least 12 of them went to his apartment to break down practically the door of his apartment, and they detained him. Four days after he criticised for the first time senile Biden.

GG: I think it's worth emphasising there, by the way, that as an American citizen, obviously he has the absolute right to criticise the president and the vice president in as harsh of terms as he wants. And there's plenty of other people saying what he said about Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. But I remember, you know, as somebody who's been covering this war, watching his reports from Ukraine, his YouTube reports and others, and was amazed at the courage that it took after he was detained at the start of the war, seeing how dissidents are being treated in Ukraine to continue to speak out so boldly, so forcefully. Now, I'm sure you've seen this before, but for those people who haven't, he posted a video on July 31st, 2023. And it's amazing because the criticisms that you have been explaining that he voiced, which I remember at the time, all basically turned out to be true. That Ukraine had no chance to win, that it would end up harming the European and American economy while bolstering the Russian economy. But here in July, the last day of July 2023, he basically posted a video knowing that if he wasn't saved by the US government, if people didn't intervene to get him free and to get him out of that country, he knew exactly what would happen, which is that he

will end up being killed in prison. So let's just watch this video for those who haven't seen it and then I want to hear your reaction to it.

Gonzalo Lira Jr.: My case originally started as a free speech issue. But because of the SBU and the inherent corruption of the SBU and the criminal justice system in Ukraine, I will definitely be sent to a prison labour camp where I will most certainly die. And so I decided that the smart thing was to take my chances in terms of getting across the border.

GG: I should have warned you about that. I know how hard that is, when you're going through grief, to see a video of the person you lost. Believe me I understand. But I think it's very important for people to have heard, because I just want to make sure that nobody thinks that the American government and the Biden administration wasn't aware of his case. A lot of us were talking about it at the time. This video circulated everywhere. And so what I want to know from you is was there any moment, obviously, he's asking for help there, when his family, when you or anybody else asked the United States government to intervene in any way in order to help him? And are you aware of any efforts that the consulate made to ensure that its rights were being protected?

GL: I sent many letters to embassy officials, including Ambassador Brink. I explained to them the fact that my son was a US citizen, and they had not done a thing to help him out. They didn't even provide an attorney. The defence attorney that Gonzalo had was appointed by the court, Glenn. Can you believe that? The Court of Ukraine appointed the defence attorney; and hear me, who didn't speak any English. How the hell could he communicate with my son? They used a translator. I had communication with this man, Victor [inaudible] through WhatsApp with the translator, in the middle, which doesn't translate exactly. You know the intention of the meaning of the words. I couldn't speak to the man. The US embassy's behaviour was unbelievable. I mean, they wanted Gonzalo to die. And I was always asking myself before falling asleep was my son that important? He has 300 and some subscribers. He had hundreds of thousands of viewers. But had he become that important, that merit to detain him? I mean, it's outrageous. What have I done so far since my poor son died? I have placed in the Secretary of State department the Freedom of Information Act. I want to know all correspondence, documents between Mr. Blinken, Victoria Nuland and the lady ambassador Brink of the USA in Ukraine that transpired between January the 1st of the year 2022 concerning my son Gonzalo. I want to know all communication exchanges between that area and the government of Ukraine, or any official of the Ukrainian government, because what they did to my son is an assassination. My son did not have any criminal charges. My son used the power of freedom of speech. I even marched in 1965, UC Berkeley Mario Savio free speech movement, the anti-war, the anti-Vietnam War. I marched in those years. I was starting at that time in the USA. I lived many years in the USA, and I cannot condone this terrible government that the USA has that has no place in the White House. We never had a worse government than this one. This man Biden is responsible for my son's assassination, because the judgement, the trial never came. They arrested him, he had been in jail for eight months without a trial. And why? I bet in different places in Ukraine that many of the political opposition of Zelensky, they would be detained by the SBU –

exactly as my son was detained. And they would keep them in jail for months because what were they doing?! The intention was to make them ill and have them die of natural causes. That is what they did to my son Gonzalo Lira, those criminal dictators that the USA is maintaining. How much money is Zelensky getting from the 115 billion that we have accomplished so far? How much has ploughed into his pocket and how much is Hunter Biden getting?

GG: I think one of the important things to note here is that obviously the United States government has influence with most countries. Probably more than any country it has the most influence in Ukraine, given the fact that the Ukrainians are completely dependent on the largesse of the American government to pay for their war, to prop them up, or are going to pay for the reconstruction of Ukraine once this was done, and once we've helped destroy it. And had the Biden administration even lifted a finger in defence of your son, he would have obviously been released from prison without having been convicted of a crime, and certainly they would not have been allowed to cause him to die in the way that he did. Just to be clear, I think I asked this before, but I want to be very clear about this. Since the death of your son, and there's obviously been a lot of media attention, not as much as there deserves to be, but a good amount, on the fact that this happened has anyone from the Biden administration, or anywhere in the US government reached out in any way to you or to your family to communicate with you, to give you information, to give you condolences or consolation, something that the American government typically does for one of their own citizens ending up in a situation like this. Have you heard from them in any way?

GL: None whatsoever. None whatsoever. More so, all they did was to intervene in the shipping of my son's urn because he was cremated. His former wife, Maria, who is an Ukrainian lady – and that's why he was living in Ukraine since the year 2016 and he had two sons [children], a ten year old girl and an eight year old boy. My two grandsons [-children] are living in Ukraine and that's why my son has been in Ukraine since the year 2016. Well, the US embassy hasn't done a thing other than they intervened in the shipping of his urn to Santiago, Chile. Because I asked specifically that I do not want that urn to go to the USA, never to touch American soil after what the USA has done to my son.

GG: The last question I have for you is – I'm sorry, I know it's very emotional. This is very new. I mean, this is not like it happened a year ago or many months ago. It's an extremely recent thing, so I think everyone understands the fact that you are quite pained and emotional about it.

GL: And, let me let me go ahead. I'm sorry. The urn – my son died on January the 11th, today is February the 9th. It's almost a month now – the urn is still in Kiev. The urn is supposed to be sent to the Chilean Embassy in Poland in Warsaw. Because they do not have, the Chileanians, an embassy in Ukraine. They are supposed to fly that urn to the embassy in Warsaw, Poland, and from there to Santiago. It's been almost a month, and my son's urn is still in Kiev. I heard rumours that they didn't want to hand over his body because Maria, his wife, wanted another autopsy. Which would definitely specify that he was tortured...

GG: But they cremated him, rendering that impossible, that autopsy impossible, obviously. Let me just ask the last question. Sorry, we're running out of time, so I just want to make sure I ask this. You described the FOIA request that you've submitted. I don't know if you have legal counsel for that or not, but are you considering legal action as well against either the Ukrainian government or the American government? And if so, do you have some kind of a defence fund or anything else where anybody who is angry about what has happened here and who wants to help can do so?

GL: Fortunately money is not a problem. I will demand/ sue the government of Ukraine. I'm doing the preliminary stages of a full demand by doing the Freedom of Information Act. I want to know exactly the information that transpired between the State Department and the government of Ukraine and the jailers of my sons from January the 1st of the year 2022 onwards. I want to get that information first, because my son's death is going to be cleared up. I want the world to know that they did not only assassinate my son, they assassinated the First Amendment of the US Constitution – the freedom of information, the freedom of speech: I have the right to give my opinion. My son was assassinated because he gave his opinion.

GG: I think the complete silence and inaction on the part of the US government, not just now, but when he was detained and when he was warning that he was going to die in prison if he wasn't saved, is one of the most disgraceful things I've seen as part of a war that itself is completely disgraceful. But I'm so happy, though I know it's difficult at this time for you to be speaking out so vocally to ensure that your son's death, that that will have some accountability. We're obviously going to continue to pursue this story until its very end, and we really appreciate you taking the time to come on and talk to us about this. Hopefully, this will bring even more attention to what was done here. If you want to go ahead and say one last thing, feel free and then we can conclude, but go ahead.

GL: Thank you, Glenn, once again, for the opportunity you've given me. I just wanted to clear one point. Gonzalo was detained May the 1st. He became ill, according to his own notes, which are physically on the internet, okay?! The note that he wrote to his sister. He became ill in mid October. So for almost five months that he was detained he was in good health. Finally they succeeded from mid-October onward, they made him ill. I just wanted to get that point clear. He was in good health for the first five months of his detainment.

GG: And as you can see in this video, obviously it's not always easy to judge a person's health in a video from a distance, but he looks perfectly active and healthy. His work output was always very prolific. He obviously had a lot of energy, and sort of just suddenly deteriorated that way and died, like I said, at 55 of pneumonia, that raises suspicions, say the least in the eyes of any reasonable person. Mr. Lira, thank you one more time. I'm sure we'll be talking again, I hope so, as you continue to pursue justice for your son. Thank you very much.

GL: It's been my great pleasure seeing you once again. As I said before, Glenn. And I hope we won't lose each other.

GG: I promise you we won't. I promise you we will not. We will definitely continue to pursue this story. Have a good evening. Thank you so much. Bye bye.

END

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