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Dear Mr Karanik,

I am deeply concerned about the relentless harassment of Volha Vialichka in retaliation for her criticism of the authorities, targeting her and her family, but also the Hrodna children's hospice of which she is the director. The hospice currently provides essential care that is not available anywhere else in Hrodna, including habilitative, psychological and social care, to 70 terminally ill children as well as crucial support to their parents.

Volha Vialichka volunteered as an independent observer for the 9 August presidential elections. Since, she has voiced her criticism in response to the rapid deterioration of the human rights situation in Belarus, and the authorities' subsequent crackdown of peaceful protesters that ensued after the widely disputed official election results.

On 9 September Volha Vialichka was arrested while fundraising at a street charity event and spent 24 hours in detention. Shortly after, representatives from the school of her 14-year-old son requested to meet Volha Vialichka over their concerns about "family wellbeing" and Volha Vialichka's son's "home environment". On 15 October Volha Vialichka was fined for participating in the above-mentioned charity event under Part 1 of the article 23.34 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus.

Since September the children's hospice that Volha Vialichka is the director of, has also become a target of the authorities. The hospice has been operating successfully and has fulfilled its financial obligations since 2008, and in March 2020 it went through a successful financial audit. Currently, the hospice's operations have been halted in two of the three premises it uses. Since 29 September the hospice's staff have been banned from entering the premises of a state-run factory where they rented rooms to run a volunteering centre. To date the hospice staff have been unable to collect hospice property from the factory building that includes important medical equipment and documentation. On 22 October, the state-run Children's Hospital No. 2 unexpectedly notified Volha Vialichka that the rental agreement for a number of rooms the hospice used to provide care to the children was being terminated. On the same date, the hospice management was visited by representatives from the Financial Investigations Department who seized the hospice's laptop and documentation, and later launched an ongoing fraud investigation against Volha Vialichka.

In the light of the above, I urge you to ensure that the harassment of Volha Vialichka stops and that the Hrodna children's hospice can continue to provide essential medical care to terminally ill children as well as continue to support their families.

Yours sincerely,