

# URGENT ACTION

## WHISTLEBLOWER DOCTOR FACING REPRISALS

**Tatyana Revva, doctor from Volgograd region, in southern Russia, is facing disciplinary proceedings that may result in dismissal, following her complaints of the shortage of personal protective equipment and other problems in her hospital in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. She should be able to perform her professional duties, and exercise her right to freedom of expression, without fear of reprisals by the administration.**

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

*Chairman of the Healthcare Committee of Volgograd Region*

*Anatoliy Ivanovich Sebelev*

*Healthcare Committee for Volgograd region*

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*Dear Chairman of the Healthcare Committee,*

*Dr. **Tatyana Revva**, an intensive care unit doctor from Kalach-on-Don, has faced reprisals after she repeatedly complained to the hospital's management about the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) for medical workers in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other work-related issues.*

*In early March, she reported her concerns to an independent trade union, Doctors' Alliance, and recorded a video describing the issues confronted by staff in her hospital. Her letter to the union and her video have since been made public. Soon after, the hospital management took disciplinary measures against Tatyana Revva, which she claims are unfounded and target her for her criticism. According to her, within a month she received two formal reprimands and one written warning from the management, and on six occasions had to give written explanations about alleged irregularities in her work. The ongoing disciplinary proceedings against Tatyana Revva have been launched for her purported violation of a patient's confidentiality. The patient in question is her father who had been admitted to the hospital's A&E department with a suspected heart attack. Tatyana visited him there and received an official reprimand for it on the grounds that she should have allegedly filled in the patient's record forms even though she was not a consulting doctor, and this was not her area of expertise. Tatyana Revva has mentioned this incident in a letter to the trade union and in an interview with a journalist. She has not disclosed her father's personal details or diagnosis and thus did not breach a patient's confidentiality. Nonetheless, this has become the grounds for the disciplinary proceedings against her and may lead to her dismissal.*

*Tatyana Revva is a frontline health worker and a whistle-blower. She is facing reprisals for exercising her right to freedom of expression. She has raised matters of public interest, in order to help take effective action to combat the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the highest attainable standard of health.*

***I urge you to take necessary steps to end reprisals (including the ongoing disciplinary proceedings) against Tatyana Revva and ensure that she is able to perform her professional duties, and exercise her right to freedom of expression, without obstruction or harassment by the hospital administration. I also call on you to look into the reports of shortage and inadequacy of personal protective equipment provided to staff at Kalach-on-Don hospital in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and take urgent steps to ensure health workers are adequately protected.***

*Yours sincerely,*

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

There are ongoing reports of reprisals faced by healthcare workers, civil society activists and human rights defenders in the context of COVID-19 pandemic in Russia. Some activists and whistle-blowers are being persecuted for raising concerns about shortage of necessary equipment, lack of training, low pay or unsafe working conditions. Others – for merely trying to help. On 2 April, Anastasia Vasilieva, leader of the independent trade union Doctors' Alliance, was detained by police together with her colleagues in Novgorod region when trying to deliver PPE to a local hospital. She was kept in detention overnight and then was charged with "disobeying police orders" and issued RUB 1,600 (USD 21) fine. In March, she was called to the Investigation Committee for questioning under the "fake news" provisions of the Russian law.

Under international human rights law, governments have an obligation to protect the right to freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds. Restrictions on the right to freedom of expression for reasons of public health are permissible, however they must be clearly provided by law, and be necessary and proportionate to protect public health, and non-discriminatory. Authorities must not restrict access and dissemination of information about the health situation. They must ensure people can easily access information through the media and the internet, as well as access official information and documents that are essential for people to be able to protect themselves and comply with the public health measures taken by the government.

States must [refrain](#) from any attempts of censorship or intimidation, retaliatory actions and/or disciplinary actions targeting journalists, civil society organizations, activists, citizen reporters, health care workers or anyone else aiming to disseminate information. Imposing undue limitations on the right to freedom of expression and the ability of people to seek information would not only violate their human rights obligations, but also jeopardise the effectiveness of the public health response itself.

When states' responses to COVID-19 are based on [restrictions of information](#), a lack of transparency and censorship, they risk undermining the rights mentioned above. They also risk making it harder for people to take adequate actions to protect themselves from infection, and for all stakeholders to obtain a realistic picture and coordinate and take effective action to combat the spread of the virus. Health workers are at the frontline of this epidemic, continuing to deliver services despite the personal risks to them and their families. The risks they face include contracting COVID-19 while doing their jobs, long working hours, psychological distress and fatigue.

While there is no official statistic in Russia on the number of medical workers who have been infected, or died, of COVID-19, media publications mention hundreds of infected healthcare staff across the country and an unofficial website lists over 100 medical workers who died fighting the pandemic. Dozens of medical professionals have complained of lack of sufficient or adequate personal protective equipment shortages, inadequate working conditions and pay.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Russian, English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 7 August 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Tatyana Revva (she/her)

**And copies to:**

His Excellency Andrei Kelin

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