

# URGENT ACTION

## RUSSIAN DOCTOR'S PERSECUTION CONTINUES

Doctor Tatyana Revva, employed in a hospital in Kalach-on-Don, southern Russia, continues to face reprisals for exposing personal protective equipment (PPE) shortages and other issues within the COVID-19 pandemic. She is appealing a court decision of 23 July that rejected her civil claim against the hospital for imposing disciplinary reprimands on her. She also learned in July that she is at risk of criminal prosecution: the district prosecutor's office overturned a decision not to initiate proceedings against her, specifically libel charges connected to her complaints.

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

**Prosecutor of Volgograd Region**

**Denis Alekseevich Kostenko**

Prosecutor's office of Volgograd region

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Online form (in Russian): [https://epp.genproc.gov.ru/web/proc\\_34/internet-reception/personal-receptionrequest](https://epp.genproc.gov.ru/web/proc_34/internet-reception/personal-receptionrequest)

Dear Prosecutor of Volgograd region,

Doctor **Tatyana Revva**, an intensive care unit doctor from Kalach-on-Don, is facing reprisals after repeated complaints to her hospital's management about the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) for medical workers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tatyana Revva has suffered unjustified disciplinary measures for these and other work-related complaints, and could lose her job for simply exercising her right to freedom of expression and raising concerns about matters of public interest. She has been trying to take effective action to combat the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the highest attainable standard of health. I am appalled to learn that on 23 July a court rejected her civil claim against the hospital for imposing disciplinary measures on her. I am aware that she is appealing this decision.

Tatyana Revva received a letter from your office in July stating that some of the issues she had complained about had been confirmed by the hospital inspection conducted by the regional prosecutor's office. However, the same letter also stated that the Kalachevsky District prosecutor's office had overturned the decision of the district police not to initiate a criminal case against her under Article 128.1 of the Russian Criminal Code ("Libel"). The letter stated that the police had been ordered to conduct an additional pre-investigatory examination into whether criminal proceedings should be opened against her. The initial pre-investigatory examination was conducted following a complaint from the head doctor of Tatyana Revva's hospital. At that time, the police refused multiple times to open a criminal case as they did not identify supporting grounds.

**I urge you to take all necessary steps to end reprisals against Tatyana Revva. These should include a halt of the ongoing pre-investigatory examination, ensuring that she is able to perform her professional duties and exercise her right to freedom of expression, without obstruction or harassment. I also call on you to take steps to ensure health workers in the Kalach-on-Don hospital and other hospitals in Volgograd region are adequately protected in the context of COVID-19.**

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In Russia there are ongoing reports of reprisals faced by healthcare workers, civil society activists and human rights defenders in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some activists and whistle-blowers are being persecuted for raising concerns about the shortage of necessary equipment, lack of training, low pay or unsafe working conditions. Others – for merely trying to help.

In early March, Tatyana Revva reported her concerns to an independent trade union, the Doctors' Alliance, and recorded a video describing the issues confronted by staff in her hospital. Her letter to the trade union and her video have since been made public. Soon after the video was made public, 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. One of the disciplinary proceedings against Tatyana Revva was launched for her purported violation of patient confidentiality. The patient in question was her father who had been admitted to the hospital's A&E department with a suspected heart attack. Tatyana Revva visited him there and received an official reprimand on the grounds that she should have completed the patient's record forms. Tatyana Revva maintains this was a private visit – to a family member – and she was not her father's consulting doctor. Moreover, her father's suspected illness was not even within her area of expertise and thus, she had nothing to do with the patient's record in this case. Tatyana Revva mentioned this incident in a letter to the trade union and in an interview with a journalist. She did not disclose her father's personal details or diagnosis and thus did not breach patient's confidentiality. Nonetheless, this has become the grounds for the disciplinary proceedings against her and may lead to her dismissal.

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. For more information please see *Eastern Europe and Central Asia confronted with COVID-19: Responses and responsibilities* <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur01/2215/2020/en/>.

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 (see more here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol30/1967/2020/en/>). 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 (<https://sites.google.com/view/covid-memory/home>) lists over 600 medical workers who died fighting the pandemic. Dozens of medical professionals have complained of lack of sufficient or adequate personal protective equipment, 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:** 14 October 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)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/2301/2020/en/>

**And copies to:**

His Excellency Andrei Kelin

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