

*For immediate release*

## **International counsel for Marsha Lazareva takes her case to the United Nations**

London, United Kingdom, 23 May 2019– The legal team representing Marsha Lazareva, a prominent member of the international business community, today filed a petition of complaint with the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), requesting an investigation into the detention and treatment of the executive, who has been imprisoned in Kuwait for over a year on false charges.

Lazareva's case is drawing international concern about the treatment of foreign investors in Kuwait and has been raised with Kuwait by [prominent political figures](#) in the UK, the US and Russia. Ms Lazareva is one of the Gulf's leading corporate figures. She is a Russian citizen and mother to a young son who is a US citizen.

The complaint was filed by an international legal team, led by Cherie Blair CBE, QC, on behalf of Marsha Lazareva, Vice Chair and Managing Director of KGL Investments. It cites Kuwait's violations of fair trial protections and of protections against arbitrary detention under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The UN working group will have to write to Kuwait to get its response before rendering an opinion, but the group could recommend Ms Lazareva's release and that Kuwait award compensation to her.

Ms Lazareva was detained in November 2017 and faced false allegations of embezzlement in the course of her work. She was initially released in February 2018 as part of a record-setting \$30 million bail arrangement, only to be convicted in May 2018 without being allowed to present a defence, and based on evidence since found to have been fabricated. She was convicted and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

After serving a year in jail, the Kuwait Appeals Court on 5 May 2019 recognised that Ms Lazareva was unlawfully convicted in violation of due process and voided her conviction and sentence. However, rather than releasing her from her wrongful confinement on the existing bail arrangement deposited with the court, Ms Lazareva continues to be arbitrarily detained pending the conclusion of her appeal because the court, without explanation or justification, required a further USD \$65 million in bail.

The UN complaint is filed as [international concern grows](#) about the ongoing imprisonment of Ms Lazareva and how this reflects on the foreign investment climate in Kuwait. Ms Lazareva has filed a separate investment arbitration complaint against Kuwait in connection with her imprisonment and arbitrary treatment by Kuwait. The complaint comes at a time when Kuwait is poised to take over as President of the UN Security Council and as the Amir is [honoured by the World Bank](#) in recognition for his support for global economic and social development causes.

Marsha's case has also been raised by Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and separately by Tatyana Yumasheva, daughter of former President Boris Yeltsin, and Vladimir Platonov, President of the Moscow Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Cherie Blair said:

“This is another example of a dangerous trend of criminalising people who are conducting legitimate business activities. The imprisonment of a prominent businesswoman, who is an important example of women's leadership in business in the Middle East, is a great concern.”

Neil Bush, son of former US President George Bush said:

“As a member of the family that helped liberate Kuwait, I would hate to see U.S.-Kuwaiti relations damaged by this incident. But there are forces within and outside the government that are creating this horrible situation.”

The complaint was filed by [Cherie Blair of Omnia Strategy LLP](#) and [Jennifer Robinson of Doughty Street Chambers](#) in London, working as part of an international legal team assembled by Crowell & Moring in Washington DC.

**Omnia Strategy LLP  
London, United Kingdom**

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