

Omnia Strategy attends Kuwait's UPR Pre-Session to champion respect for human rights, the rule of law and a resolution to the case of Marsha Lazareva

Geneva, 19 February 2025

From 19 - 21 February 2025, Omnia's Chair, [Cherie Blair, CBE, KC](#), [Lauren Lederle](#) and [Emily Hampshire](#) will be in Geneva to brief State Missions and make submissions at the UN Human Rights Council as part of Kuwait's Universal Periodic Review ("UPR"). Their interventions will focus on the ongoing due process violations concerning Ms Maria (Marsha) Lazareva and her continuing arbitrary detention by Kuwait.

Marsha was arrested in November 2017 and spent over 470 days in a notoriously overcrowded prison, isolated from her then-three year old son, Yvan, an American citizen, before being granted bail in June 2019. Under the threat of further arbitrary detention, Marsha and Yvan accepted sanctuary in the Russian Embassy in Kuwait in November 2019. They have not been able to leave since.

Prominent international human rights mechanisms have condemned the violations of Ms Lazareva's rights. In its opinion dated 28 August 2020, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention:

- Determined that Ms Lazareva had been arbitrarily detained, and found both her detention and trials to violate fundamental human rights standards outlined in Article 9 and 14 of the ICCPR;
- Called upon the Government of Kuwait to remedy the situation without delay; and
- Formally referred the case to the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers for further action in respect of reprisals against Ms Lazareva's legal team.

On 11 September 2019 and 1 February 2021, the (then) UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers made formal statements on Ms Lazareva's case to the Government of Kuwait. The UN Secretary-General also included Ms Lazareva's case in his annual report to the UN Human Rights Council on Cooperation with the United Nations, its Representatives and Mechanisms in the Field of Human Rights in 2020 and 2021.

In 2022, INTERPOL deleted a Kuwait-procured Red Notice against Marsha, citing the failure of the criminal proceedings against her to comply with human rights.

Eminent human rights organisations have also repeatedly called for Kuwait to be held accountable for its treatment of Ms Lazareva.

Despite international concern resulting from her continued mistreatment, Kuwait refuses to recognise and comply with UN decisions and continues to persecute Marsha in violation of her rights and its international obligations. Meanwhile, Marsha and Yvan's health has deteriorated significantly. Their situation needs urgent resolution.

Cherie Blair CBE, KC, who is leading Ms Lazareva's international legal team, commented:

“The UPR process is a crucial opportunity for stakeholders to engage with Kuwait constructively and encourage meaningful steps toward improving its human rights situation. We hope Kuwait will respond positively to the presentation and recommendations made.”