



Hermitage Capital Management (UK) LTD

His Excellency, Alejandro Baltazar Maldonado Aguirre,
President of the Republic of Guatemala
6ta Avenida 4-46. Zona 1, Ciudad Guatemala
Ciudad de Guatemala
Guatemala

22nd October 2015

Excellency:

I am writing to bring to your attention an ordeal faced by a Russian family imprisoned in Guatemala. Three members of the Bitkov family were arrested on 15 January 2015 (Igor – father, Irina – mother and Anastasia – daughter aged 24) and are in detention awaiting trial.

I understand that the youngest member of the family, three-year-old Vladimir, was removed from the care of friends of the Bitkov family and placed in an orphanage for 42 days without contact with his parents. When a judge finally ruled that he could be returned to his legal guardians, he emerged emaciated and psychologically traumatised. After the Bitkovs' arrest, their daughter Anastasia, who suffers from a bipolar condition was apparently deprived of necessary medication and suffered a nervous breakdown that required hospitalisation.

The treatment that this family suffered and is suffering raises serious questions about Guatemala's observance of its human rights commitments, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also raises questions on how Guatemala is being manipulated by corrupt Russian officials.

I am told that the Bitkov family fled Russia to Guatemala based on threats they had received from the Russian authorities after their paper business was stolen by corrupt officials. But now VTB, one of the Russian state bank that was allegedly involved in the theft of the Bitkovs' assets in Russia, has managed to make itself part of the Guatemalan criminal proceedings against the Bitkovs.

I am writing as another victim of abuses perpetrated by similarly corrupt Russian officials. My Russian lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, was imprisoned, tortured and killed in Russian custody after he had exposed the \$230 million theft by corrupt Russian officials. The very same Russian officials he had exposed then arrested him and put him in pre-trial detention center where he was beaten with rubber batons and died. The Magnitsky Case has been condemned by the Council of Europe, the United States, Great Britain, the European Union and many other governments around the world and has come to symbolize the absence of the rule of law in Russia and the shocking human rights human rights violations that take place there.



In the Bitkov case, eight months after their arrest, Igor Bitkov is still incarcerated, Irina and Anastasia are being detained at a hospital facility, while their three-year old boy is living with guardians despite unexplainable efforts by the director of the "Amor del niño" orphanage in Guatemala City to have him taken back into state care. The Bitkovs deserve to be reunited as a family.

Your Excellency, I understand that the Bitkovs have applied for political asylum in Guatemala. I strongly urge the Guatemalan authorities to review their case quickly and provide them with the protection they urgently require. If they are forced to return to Russia, they will have no chance of a fair trial and will almost certainly receive long jail sentences to be served in dangerous and inhumane conditions.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Browder

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