

## **Testimony of Karolis Venckus**

My mom Neringa Venckiene is a former judge and a Parliament member of Lithuania. She's currently detained in Chicago's Federal Prison by the request of the Lithuanian government. She faces nearly 40 charges in our home country.

The case started in 2008, when my cousin, who was 4-years-old at the time, testified that while visiting her biological mother, she has been abused by three men, who were associates of her mother. She identified the men as Andrius Usas, a businessman and an advisor to the Speaker of the Parliament, Judge Jonas Furmanavicius and a third individual only known as Aidas. My uncle, the girl's father, spent nearly a year trying to bring the case to court, he sent out more the 200 requests asking for an investigation into his daughter's claims about her sexual exploitation, he spoke to national media, and pleaded for help from local politicians. And although court-ordered psychiatrists and psychologists determined the girl's testimony as true and not a result of fantasy or fabrication, the case seemed to be going nowhere.

In October 2009, the accused judge and another women involved in the abuse were shot and killed, and my cousin's father disappeared that day. My uncle became the prime suspect. Right away, the prosecutors announced on national media that there was DNA evidence on the murder weapon confirming that my uncle committed the crime. Only much later the prosecutors had to admit that they have made a mistake and no DNA was found. A few months later, my uncle was also found dead.

After my uncle's disappearance in October of 2009, government officials seized my cousin from the kindergarten and placed her in a psychiatric hospital. My mom was given custody of my cousin, and they were finally able to come home. The case was finally started, and it was concluded that the prosecutors stalled the case and neglected to investigate my cousin's claims. Many of the officials involved lost their jobs, including the Prosecutor General.

My mom who was a judge at the time, started to publicly speak about the bribery and corruption in the Lithuanian courts. Journalists that supported my mom were often fined, or their shows prohibited to air.

In May of 2010, the court announced that my cousin has to live with her biological mother, despite the fact that the pedophilia case has not been concluded yet and the fact that the girl was testifying against her mother for facilitating the molestation. My cousin refused to go, and thousands of Lithuanians surrounded the house and would not let the police pass and seize her. In June of that year, the alleged pedophile Usas, was also found dead. According to the government, according to government, he also died of "natural causes" - has was found laying in a few-inch-deep puddle of water near his four-wheeler with his helmet near him.

My cousin developed PTSD from attempts to return her to her mother, and - her doctors issued an order against further traumatizing attempts. Despite that fact,

on May 17th, 2012, around 240 police officers came to our house and used force to carry my cousin away screaming.

I haven't seen my cousin ever since. After that day there were massive protests and demonstrations in Lithuania and abroad. My mother resigned from the bench, and founded a new political party, created to fight against corruption and pedophilia, which won 7 seats in the Parliament, while having almost 0 funding. She promised to reform the judicial and political system in Lithuania, with stricter punishments for corruption, rape and pedophilia.

Soon after the election, the Prosecutor General, requested the Parliament to remove my mother's legal immunity once again, but this time with one new allegation. The Liberals, the Conservatives and the Socialists, all announced that they will be voting in favor of removing my mother's legal immunity, even before any evidence was presented and even before the ruling of the Parliamentary Commission that was supposed to investigate the matter.

It became clear that my mom was an inconvenient obstacle to the corrupt legal and political systems, and it was not safe for her in Lithuania anymore. So, in 2013, my mother and I fled to United States and asked for political asylum. But the Lithuanian Government is seeking my mom's extradition before her political asylum case takes place. And the current extradition treaty does not allow my mom to present any counter evidence to the Lithuanian Government's claims, or to demonstrate the political nature of the case.

The number of crimes that my mom is accused of in Lithuania grew to 39. My grandparents, my aunts and uncles, our neighbors, my mom's supporters and many of her party members are all facing charges in Lithuania, and some of them have already been sentenced. My mother will never receive a fair trial in Lithuania, because Gintaras Kryzevicius, the chairman of the Supreme Court of Lithuania has called my mom "an abscess in the judicial and the political system" and the "trouble of the whole state" and the journalists, the prosecutors, and the politicians have been developing that narrative for years now. How can she receive a fair trial in Lithuania, when the highest court officials are making public statements like this? There have been multiple uninvestigated deaths associated with the pedophilia case in Lithuania, and my mom and our family have also received multiple threats. And during one of my mom's campaign rallies, her car was tampered with. The Government of Lithuania is biased towards my mother, and it is neither capable of guaranteeing a fair trial for her, nor can it guarantee her safety there.