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Dear Director of the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Altai Krai,

Dear Commissioner for Human Rights in the Altai Krai,

We are deeply concerned by the unjust imprisonment and alleged ill-treatment of a RusNews journalist Maria Ponomarenko who is under your control. Since her arrest in 2022 there have been multiple reports of her ill-treatment and arbitrary punishment in custody in IK-6 (Shipunovo) and SIZO-1 and SIZO-2 in Barnaul, including: Forced psychiatric treatment, including administration of unknown drugs; Provision of ill-fitting shoes ahead of a disciplinary hearing; Disruptions in provision of medication; Confiscation of authorized goods and groceries by Federal Penitentiary Service staff; Threats by Federal Penitentiary Service staff to deprive Maria of phone calls with her family; Repeated placement in solitary confinement.

Maria suffers from claustrophobia and other mental health conditions and cannot safely be placed in solitary confinement. During her previous placement in a punishment cell her mental health deteriorated, and she attempted suicide. She went on hunger strike after being placed in solitary confinement to protest her undignified treatment by the prison authorities. This ill-treatment by the prison authorities under your control puts Maria Ponomarenko's health, both physical and mental, as well as her life at risk. It violates her human rights and I'm concerned this is being carried out as a form of reprisal for her expressing her anti-war views.

We urge you to release Maria Ponomarenko immediately and unconditionally. In the meantime, I request that you use your existing powers to ensure that the ill-treatment of Maria Ponomarenko is immediately stopped and that her treatment in any prison institution, as well as while in transit between them, complies with international law and standards. All those suspected of responsibility for Maria Ponomarenko's ill-treatment must be brought to justice in fair proceedings in accordance with international law.

Yours sincerely,