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Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden
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Her Majesty the Queen,

I am writing to you today on behalf of a friend and his mom. It's a difficult story to tell, yet perhaps more so, a difficult story to hear. I believe, however, it deserves to be heard, for we are all members of family, parents and children. My concern is with the respect, dignity and compassion we regard the elderly in our community. Sadly, it seems there is a tradition, independent of place, culture or country that marginalizes the elderly. I am asking for your courage and strength, and your kindness; any small effort to ameliorate the struggles of this young man and his mom. For in helping them, I believe we improve the quality of life for everyone.

Two years ago Calle Johansson's mom, Ida Johansson, suffered a stroke. She lost the use of her right arm and much of her ability to communicate with words. Nevertheless, as is usual of stroke victims, she remains every bit a lively, engaging and thoughtful woman. But because we choose to neglect her, her suffering is compounded. We deny her small comforts and give her drugs; a nightlight (occasionally taken away) would ease her fear of the dark much better than forced sleeping pills. We refuse her basic care and leave her lying long hours at a time, unable to move in her own excrement. We take away her right to choose and leave her locked away in the nursing home, Levinsgården (Kullenvägen 10, 830 90 Gäddede), –despite her clear and repeated requests to be someplace else.

I met Ida for the first time Sunday, 4 January. She was initially nervous until Calle explained I was a friend; understandable as, since being admitted to Levinsgården, she has developed a fear of the staff and anyone new she does not recognize. We sat together watching skiing on television and shared some food. It was a small politeness but it was easy to see the joy and pride it gave her to invite me for tea at her table. She insisted I try the cookies and made sure to hand some to me. I'm happy to say, when we met two days later, she was much more comfortable with me and extended her hand to hold mine. Knowing she remains there against her will leaves me deeply sad.

Ida has been granted multiple opportunities to be moved to a medical facility and receive physical rehabilitation therapy. Despite the years of trauma at Levinsgården,

still she can communicate and has expressed her desire to relocate. The choice, however, is no longer hers. Why has this right been taken away from her? Why do we refuse her this one essential basic human dignity, the right to personal freedom? What are we so afraid of?

I believe we are a great society when we value and respect each and everyone equally. I implore you, please review her circumstances. It is tender to realize how frail we can be. And all the more heartbreaking to witness the injustice and cruelty we allow on the frail and unfortunate few. I hope her story will move you to action, as it has me to write you this letter.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas on the matter.

humbly yours,

Simal Saujani