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Ukraine: Yevhenii Shulhat targeted with surveillance and pressure to conscribe to the military

On 8 April 2024, human rights defender and journalist **Yevhenii Shulhat** filed a complaint with the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine regarding threats he received after publishing an anti-corruption investigation involving a high-ranking official from the Department of Cyber Security of the Security Service of Ukraine. Additionally, he reported an attempt to conscript him into the military as a retaliation for his human rights work on 1 April 2024.

[Yevhenii Shulhat](#) is a human rights defender and an investigative journalist who conducts probing investigations into corruption among state officials in Ukraine. He collaborates with the investigative media outlet [Slidstvo.info](#), which delves into corruption schemes involving state officials and exposes war crimes committed by the Russian military in Ukraine. Slidstvo.info employs various mediums such as investigative documentaries, special reports, and blog posts to disseminate their findings. Yevhenii Shulhat is also a member of the Public Integrity Council - an independent public body that since 2016, assists the Ukrainian Higher Qualifications Commission for Judges in evaluating current judges and selecting candidates for judicial positions.

On 8 April 2024, Yevhenii Shulhat lodged a complaint with the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine, citing abuse of power by a state official— a violation under Article 364(1) of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. Following his request for information about a high-ranking official from the Department of Cyber Security of the Security Service of Ukraine, Yevhenii Shulhat faced threats and surveillance. The Prosecutor General's Office announced on the same day that they had initiated an investigation against the human rights defender, citing Articles 364 and 171 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

In the complaint, the human rights defender stated that at approximately 9PM on 1 April 2024, which is after hours for any voluntary conscription activities, two representatives from the Conscription Center approached Yevhenii Shulhat in his local grocery store and attempted to present him with conscription papers for the Ukrainian military. Yevhenii Shulhat reported being subjected to physical surveillance prior to being approached by the officials. Furthermore, the human rights defender revealed that after obtaining CCTV recordings from the incident at the store, he and his colleagues from Slidstvo.info identified the two representatives of the Conscription Center as individuals linked to a high-ranking official from the Department of Cyber Security of the Security Service of Ukraine, who is the main subject of the investigation by human rights defenders.

On 28 March 2024, while working on an anti-corruption investigation concerning a high-ranking official, Yevhenii Shulhat sent a request for information to the Department of Cyber Security of the Security Service of Ukraine after an unsuccessful attempt to reach the official by phone on 27 March 2024. Authorities at the Department of Cyber Security responded to the request with dissatisfaction, suggesting the human rights defender change in the tone of the anti-corruption investigation, that Slidstvo.info [published](#) on 4 April 2024.

This is not the first instance of human rights defenders focusing on corruption investigations being targeted in Ukraine. On 14 January 2024, unidentified individuals attempted to break into the Kyiv apartment of human rights defender and journalist Yurii Nikolov, co-founder and editor of the anti-corruption investigative media Nashi Groshi. Following the unsuccessful break-in, the assailants left signs reading "traitor" on Nikolov's door, and he was subsequently subjected to a smear campaign on Telegram.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the targeting of human rights defender and journalist Yevhenii Shulhat for his peaceful and legitimate human rights work. The organization welcomes the decision of Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office to launch an investigation into the instances of targeting of Yevhenii Shulhat. Front Line Defenders emphasizes that during Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine, human rights defenders and journalists investigating corruption within Ukrainian governmental bodies play a crucial role in ensuring high standards of accountability and transparency.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Ukraine to:

1. Conduct an immediate, thorough, and impartial investigation into the documented instances of targeting against human rights defender and journalist Yevhenii Shulhat.
2. Ensure that all necessary measures are taken to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Yevhenii Shulhat.
3. Refrain from utilizing military service as a tool to target human rights defenders and journalists for their legitimate and peaceful human rights work.
4. Guarantee that all human rights defenders and journalists in Ukraine can carry out their activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, aligning with Ukraine's international human rights obligations and commitments.

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