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Kyrgyzstan: Citizenship revoked and ongoing judicial prosecution of human rights defender Bolot Temirov

On 17 May 2022, human rights defender **Bolot Temirov** was stripped of his Kyrgyzstan citizenship. The human rights defender's passport was listed in the database of the National Registration Agency of the Kyrgyzstan Republic Government as invalid, without an official court decision. Additionally, on 18 May 2022, the Sverdlovsk District Court in the Bishkek City Court initiated preliminary proceedings against the human rights defender.

[Bolot Temirov](#) is a Kyrgyzstani human rights defender and prominent journalist, investigating corruption. In January 2020, the human rights defender founded the YouTube-based media outlet "Temirov Live", that investigates and reports on corruption of state and non-state actors. In 2021, he was recognised by the U.S. State Department as an anti-corruption champion and was awarded the International Anti-Corruption Champions Award for his work to combat corruption in Kyrgyzstan. If convicted, Bolot Temirov could face between 10 to 15 years in prison.

On 17 May 2022, human rights defender Bolot Temirov was stripped of his Kyrgyzstan citizenship by the Ministry of the Interior. Bolot Temirov's passport was listed on the database of the National Registration Agency of the Kyrgyztan Republic Government as invalid, without an official court decision.

On 18 May 2022, the Sverdlovsky District Court in the Bishkek City Court initiated preliminary proceedings against human rights defender Bolot Temirov. This included criminal charges of forgery of documents, illegal crossing of state borders and drug-related crime. The Court rejected the motion to exclude inadmissible evidence that was collected during a search of Temirov Live's office on 22 January 2022 in relation to the drug-related charge. During the search, nine Counter Narcotics Service (CNS) officers burst into the office while filming. However, there is 1 minute missing from the video as the officer who was videoing could not keep up with the search. The prosecutors obtained this footage in violation of the Criminal Procedure Code, however the request from the human rights defender's legal counsel to exclude this inadmissible evidence was refused. Bolot Temirov's legal council filed and appeal which will be held on 6 June 2022. . The video shows the human rights defender taking the drugs that were planted on him out of his pockets, upon the request of the CNS officers. On 17 May 2022, Bolot Temirov was stripped of his Kyrgyzstan citizenship by the Ministry of the Interior. Bolot Temirov's passport was listed on the database of the National Registration Agency of the Kyrgyztan Republic Government as invalid, without an official court decision.

On 19 April 2022, police investigators in Bishkek charged Bolot Temirov with allegedly-forging documents as per Article 379 and illegal border crossing as per Article 378 of the Kyrgyzstan Criminal Code. The police claim that the human rights defender holds a Russian passport, and that he used forged documents to obtain a Kyrgyz passport and illegally exited and entered Kyrgyzstan more than 50 times in 2008.

On 20 January 2022, Temirov Live published a video investigating the alleged involvement of the family members of State Committee for National Security Head, Kamchybek Tashiev, in a corruption scheme relating to a state-owned petroleum refinery. On 22 January 2022, nine masked police officers raided the office of the YouTube-based outlet, Temirov Live, in Bishkek without a warrant and searched it for approximately three hours. During the raid, police officers confiscated

all computers and forced male staff members to the ground. According to Bolot Temirov, officers planted a bag of drugs in his back pocket while pinning him down during the raid. Bolot Temirov was arrested without knowledge of why, and his lawyer was unable to meet his client for several hours. While the human rights defender was detained, the police officers questioned him, and he underwent a urine test which tested negative for drugs. According to Bolot Temirov, his arrest was in retaliation for an investigation denouncing state corruption published by Temirov Live in January 2022. The CNS officers confiscated Temirov Live's security camera footage, showing the order of events during the search, including the planting of the drugs on the human rights defenders.

On 23 January 2022, Bolot Temirov appeared before the Bishkek District Court. The human rights defender was charged with "illegal making, acquisition, storage, transportation, or sending of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances without the purpose of sale" as per Part 1 of Article 254 of the Kyrgyzstan Criminal Code. The Bishkek District Court found that the human rights defender's detention was unlawful and ordered his release from custody. However, Bolot Temirov was instructed not to leave the city, and signed a non-disclosure agreement.

Bolot Temirov has been targeted with ongoing harassment. On 9 January 2020, Bolot Temirov was beaten by three unidentified men shortly after publishing a series of high-profile corruption reports. The human rights defender reported this incident to the authorities, following which the attackers were sentenced. However, those who hired the attackers in this incident were never identified. In December 2021, he discovered a hidden camera and microphone in his living room. The human rights defender is accused of being a "traitor" in the services of foreign interests by a cyber-harassment campaign by nationalist propaganda websites. Moreover, Bolot Temirov announced via Temirov Live, that they were under close surveillance and that staff members had been subjected to repeated threats and blackmail by unknown individuals online. Several attempts had been made to hack Temirov Live's passwords following the investigation.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the judicial prosecution of human rights defender Bolot Temirov. Front Line Defenders further condemns the stripping of Bolot Temirov's passport and Kyrgyz citizenship. Front Line Defender believes that the judicial prosecution of the human rights defenders and the stripping of Bolot Temirov's passport and Kyrgyz citizenship has a chilling effect on the peaceful and legitimate work of human rights defenders in Kyrgyzstan. Such targeting undermines access to free and independent press and limit the freedom of speech and expression in Kyrgyzstan.

Front Line defenders urges the Kyrgyzstani authorities to:

1. Immediately reinstate the citizenship of human rights defender Bolot Temirov, as Front Line Defenders believes the annulment was in retaliation for his peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Immediately cease the prosecution and the judicial harassment of Bolot Temirov and his colleagues, return their confiscated computers and guarantee to journalists of outlet Temirov Live physical and psychological security and integrity;
3. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the police raid the office of the YouTube-based outlet Temirov Live, publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Kyrgyzstan can carry out their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with the Kyrgyzstan's international human rights obligations and commitments.