

07 June 2019

Russian Federation: Investigative journalist Ivan Golunov accused of drug trafficking

On 6 June 2019, investigative journalist **Ivan Golunov** was stopped by police officers in plain clothes while he was heading to a meeting with a source in his investigation, in Moscow. The police allegedly found a bag of narcotic substance in his backpack and he was accused of drug trafficking. The journalist is convinced that the drugs have been planted on him.

[Ivan Golunov](#) is a prominent journalist working for the news website Meduza.io, famous for his numerous investigations on corruption and embezzlement in Moscow, including in connection to the Moscow City Hall administration. Ivan Golunov has recently been working on a new investigation and has received threats in connection to his work.

On 6 June 2019, around 2.30 pm, Ivan Golunov was stopped near the metro station Tsvetnoy Boulevard in Moscow while heading to a meeting with his informant. He was only officially arrested the next day at 3.50 am at a police station located on Lunacharsky street in Moscow. For more than 12 hours, despite his requests, Ivan Golunov was held incommunicado and without access to his lawyer. Russian law requires an arrest to be formalised within three hours and guarantees access to lawyer and family. He also reported that he had been beaten by the police and denied medical assistance. According to his lawyer, police refused to take fingerprints and swabs of Ivan Golunov's fingernails to check if he had touched the narcotic substance.

On 7 June 2019, the Ministry of Interior published nine photos of narcotic substances, allegedly taken in the apartment of Ivan Golunov. The journalist stated that during his incommunicado detention, the police had had access to his apartment, and that only one photo out of nine had been taken there.

The criminal case against Ivan Golunov was opened under Article 228.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation for "illegal acquisition, storage, transportation, making and processing of narcotic drugs". If found guilty of large-scale drug trafficking, Golunov could face up to 20 years in jail.

On 7 June 2019, the editorial team of Meduza issued an official statement asserting that Golunov had been framed, and calling for his release. "We know that in recent months he has received threats, we know the reasons why he has been threatened and we have an idea from whom the threats have come", reads the statement.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the incommunicado detention and subsequent arrest of investigative journalist Ivan Golunov, as well as the charges brought against him, as they are believed to be solely motivated by his peaceful and legitimate work fighting corruption and defending the right to freedom of expression in the Russian Federation.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Russian Federation to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Ivan Golunov, as Front Line Defenders believes that he is being held solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Immediately drop all charges against Ivan Golunov, as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological security of Ivan Golunov;
4. Ensure that the treatment of Ivan Golunov, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
5. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the alleged drug planting on Ivan Golunov, his arbitrary incommunicado detention and his ill-treatment by the police, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
6. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Russian Federation are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

Front Line Defenders Board of Trustees

Denis O'Brien, Noeline Blackwell, Jim Conway, Mary Lawlor, Maria Mulcahy, Kieran Mulvey, Mary Jane Real (Philippines), David Sykes, Arnold Tsunga (Zimbabwe)

Front Line Defenders International Advisory Council

James L. Cavallaro, Maryam Elahi, Michel Forst, Hina Jilani, Maina Kiai

Front Line, The International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders trading as Front Line Defenders, is registered in Ireland as a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. Registered Office: Second Floor, Grattan House, Temple Road, Blackrock, Co Dublin, A94 FA39, Ireland.

Company No. 593190; Registered Charity No. 20045241; CHY 14029