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Europe/Ex-USSR - Kazakhstan

Scapegoat

Investigative reporter held arbitrarily in northeastern city

13 June 2015

Reporters Without Borders condemns investigative reporter **Yaroslav Golyshkin**'s arbitrary detention for the past month in a prison in the northeastern city of Pavlodar and calls on the judicial system to guarantee his right to due process.

[Everything indicates](#) that the regional authorities are trying to make him the scapegoat for a scandal allegedly involving Pavlodar regional governor Kanat Bozumbayev's son.

Arrested by the National Security Committee (KNB) on 14 May, Golyshkin is being held on blackmail and extortion charges brought by the governor and is currently subject to a pre-trial detention order valid until 16 July.

Golyshkin was investigating a rape that allegedly took place in the governor's residence on the night of 19 February. The regional prosecutor's office conducted a criminal investigation into the rape that was closed on 16 April after an out-of-court settlement between the victim and perpetrator.

Pavlodar had been abuzz with rumours about the rape since late February but the authorities refused to provide any information to the local media, which tried to establish the facts on their own.

Golyshkin, who has done well-researched stories on corruption and criminal cases in the past, managed to contact the young victim and film her account of the assault. But he decided not to publish the video, partly because he did not want to cause her problems and partly because he wanted to get additional evidence.

The authorities nonetheless knew he was investigating the case and, in mid-April, he was summoned for questioning by the KNB and learned that the governor had accused him of blackmail on the basis of the video, which reportedly implicated his son.

Subjected to repeated interrogations sessions without being charged, Golyshkin surrendered all copies of the video to the authorities. According to his lawyer, he was finally arrested when he refused to make a false statement clearing the governor's son of any blame.

"Golyshkin has been in prison for the past month but no one has been charged for the rape he was investigating," said Johann Bihl, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk.

"The many inconsistencies and contradictions surrounding this case give the impression that trumped-up charges have been brought against Golyshkin and that he is just a scapegoat. We urge the authorities to free him at once and to transfer the case to a different jurisdiction."

Golyshkin's lawyer, Dmitry Kuryachenko, was himself detained for four hours in early June for trying to give Golyshkin a letter from his mother.

The rape victim and a girl-friend are currently being held by the KNB in what the authorities call "judicial protection." But this is disputed by her family, who are being denied any contact with her. Internet access to most articles about the case is blocked within hours of their being posted online.

Renowned for his professionalism, Golyshkin writes stories that are often critical of the local authorities for *Versya*, a local newspaper. He was physically attacked in April 2006 after reporting the abduction of a member of the financial police who had been investigating organized crime.

Kazakhstan is ranked 160th out of 180 countries in the [2015 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#). All of the leading independent national newspapers [were closed in 2012](#) and all attempts to create new ones have been [quickly suppressed](#). A handful of independent regional newspapers [struggle](#) to survive.

[Sign the petition](#) in support of Golyshkin launched by Kazakh NGO "Legal Media Centre" (in Russian)
