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Crimea (Ukraine): Human rights lawyer Edem Semedliaev charged and fined

On 26 May 2022, law enforcement officers of the Center for Combating Extremism within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation arrested and fined human rights defender and lawyer **Edem Semedliaev** in Simferopol, Crimea. The human rights defender was accused of being tagged in a Facebook post that has allegedly “discredited the actions of the Russian Armed Forces,” a new crime that the Russian government introduced since launching a full-scale war in Ukraine. On the same day, Kyiv District Court of the city of Simferopol found Edem Semedliaev guilty of this charge and fined him 75,000 rubles (1,050 Euro).

[Edem Semedliaev](#) is a Crimean human rights defender and lawyer. Since the occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, he has been actively involved in legally representing and defending the rights of the Crimean Tatars, who have become one of the major targets for the authorities, alongside civil society activists and journalists.

On 26 May 2022, at approximately 11:30, human rights defender and lawyer Edem Semedliaev was detained on Lermontov Street, in the centre of Simferopol, Crimea, by officers of the Centre for Combating Extremism of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation. Edem Semedliaev was reported to be detained on charges of discrediting the Russian Armed Forces as stipulated by the newly introduced Part 2, Article 20.3.3 of the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offences (the Administrative Code). This charge is related to a Facebook post on 16 April 2022 by a user account called “Rafis Kashapov”, that allegedly belongs to the representative of the civic movement “Free Idel-Ural”. Edem Semedliaev was tagged in their post regarding the crimes committed by the Russian army during the full-scale war in Ukraine. The human rights defender reported that he deleted the tag immediately and the post was no longer connected to his Facebook page. On the same day, the Kyiv District Court of the city of Simferopol found Edem Semedliaev guilty and ordered him to pay out a fine of 75,000 rubles (1,050 Euro).

Immediately after the court hearing, the officers of the Centre for Combating Extremism of the Ministry of Internal Affairs arrested Edem Semedliaev’s defence attorney, **Nazim Sheikmambetov**. After his arrest, Nazim Sheikmambetov was brought to the premises of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Crimean peninsula in Simferopol.

The officers charged Nazim Sheikmambetov, with violation of on Article 20.2.2 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation. He is being accused that on 26 October 2021, he allegedly violated COVID-19 regulations in a public place as he was “voluntarily taking part in a mass event implying co-presence in a public place to support detained Crimean Tatar nationals.” Edem Semedliaev acted as Nazim Sheikmambetov’s attorney.

As a human rights lawyer working in the Russian-occupied territory of Crimea, Edem Semedliaev experiences repeated judicial prosecution and pressure. On 11 November 2021, the Central District Court of Simferopol found Edem Semedliaev guilty of two counts of “disobeying the lawful orders of a police officer” as per Article 19.3 of the Administrative Code. The human rights defender was sentenced to 12 days of administrative detention and issued a fine of 4,000 rubles (56 Euro) for refusing to undress and undergo an unlawful personal search. On 25 October 2021, the human rights lawyer was subjected to mistreatment and harassment by law enforcement authorities while trying to provide legal assistance to his clients at the Central Police Precinct of Simferopol. Additionally, an unjust civil lawsuit was fabricated against him and he was detained. On 26 October 2021, the human rights lawyer appeared in court and the case concluded with it being returned to the police, as there were inconsistencies in the paperwork.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the detention and prosecution of human rights defender, Edem Semedliaev, as it believes he has been solely targeted as a result of his legitimate work as a human rights lawyer. The targeting and systemic persecution of human rights lawyers by the Russian Federal Security Services forms part of a worrying trend in Crimea since its annexation in 2014. This systemic persecution includes sustained judicial prosecution, office raids, disciplinary penalties, and disbarment threats.

Front Line Defenders urges the Russian authorities to:

1. Immediately quash the conviction of human rights defender and lawyer Edem Semedliaev, as it is believed that the charges were fabricated because of his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Cease the practice of judicial prosecution and other means of persecution and harassment of human rights lawyers in Crimea;
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Crimea and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.