



TAS / CAS
TRIBUNAL ARBITRAL DU SPORT
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MEDIA RELEASE

FOOTBALL - MALAYSIA

THE COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT (CAS) PARTLY AMENDS SANCTION AGAINST SEVEN PLAYERS FALSELY MADE ELIGIBLE TO PLAY FOR MALAYSIA

Lausanne, 5 March 2026 – The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) has partially upheld an appeal by seven players against the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), concerning sanctions for falsifying naturalisation and eligibility documents. The CAS Panel ruled that the seven players shall receive a ban for 12 months, but from official matches only and not from all football-related activities. A consolidated appeal by the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) was dismissed and the decision by FIFA to impose a CHF 350'000 fine on FAM remains in place.

In 2025, FAM approached the players Facundo Tomás Garcés Rattaro, Rodrigo Julián Holgado, Imanol Javier Machuca, Joao Vitor Brandao Figueiredo, Gabriel Felipe Arrocha, Jon Irazabal Iraurgi and Hector Alejandro Hevel Serrano to advise that they might lawfully seek Malaysian citizenship and play for the FAM national team. The players underwent naturalisation and were issued Malaysian passports.

On 25 September 2025, the FIFA Disciplinary Committee found that FAM and the players had violated the FIFA Disciplinary Code (FDC) by using falsified documents for the naturalisation and eligibility process, despite the players having no connection to Malaysia. This decision was upheld on 3 November 2025 by the FIFA Appeal Committee, who confirmed a CHF 350'000 fine on FAM and for each player, a CHF 2'000 fine and a 12-month suspension from all football-related activities.

FAM and the players filed consolidated appeals with CAS on 5 December 2025. In their appeal, FAM accepted the existence of “institutional shortcomings” and did not dispute that it may bear responsibility in violating the FDC. It also stated that the players had a limited role in providing documents requested by FAM and did not prepare, nor alter them. The FAM appeal requested to set aside the decision by the FIFA Appeal Committee and that FAM should be sanctioned with a fine not exceeding CHF 50,000. The appeals by the players requested to annul the FIFA Appeal Committee decision in its entirety, or in the alternative, issue a proportionate sanction, as the players did not act with intent or negligence.

The appeals considered jointly by a CAS Arbitral Panel composed of Lars Hilliger (Denmark) as President, José Luis Andrade (Portugal) and Massimo Coccia (Italy). An in-person hearing took place on 26 February 2026 at CAS headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland.



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After considering the evidence, the CAS Panel found that the infraction of falsifying eligibility documents was established and that the 12-month ban from playing matches was a reasonable and proportionate sanction for the players, given their complicit responsibility in this fraud. However, in accordance with Article 22 FDC, the Panel decided that the ban should only apply to matches and not to all football-related activities. This means the players can resume training with their respective clubs during the ban. Consequently, the appeals by the players were partially upheld and the sanctions are partly amended.

The ban from playing matches starts today 5 March 2026, with credit for the period from 25 September 2025 until 26 January 2026 included, where the ban was effectively served. The CAS Panel considered that the CHF 350'000 fine on FAM was justified and proportionate.

This is an operative decision (without grounds), with a full CAS Award to be issued in due course. A decision with grounds will follow and for legal purposes, only the wording used in the written decision is binding.

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