

# Decision of the FIFA Appeal Committee

passed on 3 November 2025

## DECISION BY:

**Neil EGGLESTON (USA), Chairperson**

**Dan KAKARAYA (Papua New Guinea), Member**

**Samuel RAM (Fiji), Member**

## ON THE CASE OF:

**Facundo Tomas Garces Rattaro**

**Rodrigo Julian Holgado**

**Imanol Javier Machuca**

(Decision FDD-25550)

**Hector Alejandro Hevel Serrano**

**Joao Vitor Brandao Figueiredo**

**Jon Irazabal Iraurgui**

**Gabriel Felipe Arrocha**

(Decision FDD-25566)

**Football Association of Malaysia**

(Decision FDD-25574)

## AGAINST:

**Decision of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee passed on 25 September 2025 (Ref. FDD-24394)**

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## I. FACTS

1. The following summary of the facts does not purport to include every single contention put forth by the parties at these proceedings. However, the FIFA Appeal Committee (**the Committee**) has thoroughly considered any and all evidence and arguments submitted, even if no specific or detailed reference has been made to those arguments in the following outline and in the ensuing discussion on the merits.

### A. Introduction

2. The parties to these appeal proceedings are the Football Association of Malaysia (**FAM**) and the following players (hereinafter all together, the **Players**). It is to be noted that all the Players were born outside of Malaysia, as detailed in continuation:

Player	Name	Birthplace	Date of birth	Age
Player 1	Gabriel Felipe Arrocha <sup>1</sup>	Santa Cruz de la Palma, Spain	15-Jan-2002	23
Player 2	Facundo Tomás Garcés Rattaro	Santa Fe, Argentina	5-Sep-1999	26
Player 3	Rodrigo Julián Holgado	Buenos Aires, Argentina	28-Jun-1994	30
Player 4	Imanol Javier Machuca	Rosario, Argentina	15-Jan-2000	25
Player 5	João Vítor Brandão Figueiredo	São Paulo, Brazil	27-May-1996	29
Player 6	Jon Irazabal Iraurgui	Bilbao, Spain	28-Nov-1996	28
Player 7	Héctor Alejandro Hevel Serrano	Leidschendam, the Netherlands	15-May-1996	29

3. The Players and the FAM are hereinafter jointly referred to as "Appellants".
4. In accordance with publicly available information and the FIFA Transfer Matching System (**TMS**), as well as the evidence given by the Players at the hearing, Players 1, 2, 3, and 4 never played for any Malaysian clubs before they debuted for the Malaysian national senior representative team. In turn, Players 5, 6 and 7, joined Malaysian side Johor Darul Ta'zim mid-2025 and debuted on 22 August 2025 in the match JDT v. Lion City Sailors in the context of the ASEAN Club Championship.
5. In respect of the Players' respective careers at club level, the below can be inferred based on publicly available information and TMS:

Player	Name	Clubs
Player 1	Gabriel Felipe Arrocha	Tenisca (Spain), Las Palmas (Spain), Gimnástica Segoviana (Spain), Tenerife (Spain), Unionistas de Salamanca (Spain)

<sup>1</sup> Also known as "Gabriel Palmero".

Player 2	Facundo Tomás Garcés Rattaro	Colón (Argentina), Deportivo Alavés (Spain)
Player 3	Rodrigo Julián Holgado	San Lorenzo (Argentina), Almagro (Argentina), Orizaba (Mexico), Veracruz (Mexico), Coquimbo Unido (Chile), Audax Italiano (Chile), Gimnasia LP (Argentina), Curicó Unido (Chile), América de Cali (Colombia)
Player 4	Imanol Javier Machuca	Unión Santa Fe (Argentina), Fortaleza (Brazil), Vélez Sarsfield (Argentina)
Player 5	João Vítor Brandão Figueiredo	Atlético Mineiro (Brazil), Democrata (Brazil), Kauno Žalgiris (Lithuania), OFI Crete (Greece), Al-Wasl (UAE), Gaziantep FK (Turkey), İstanbul Başakşehir (Turkey), Johor Darul Ta'zim (Malaysia)
Player 6	Jon Irazabal Iraurgui	Sondika (Spain), Vitoria (Spain), Mirandés (Spain), Leioa (Spain), Amorebieta (Spain), Sabah (Azerbaijan), Johor Darul Ta'zim (Malaysia)
Player 7	Héctor Alejandro Hevel Serrano	ADO Den Haag (Netherlands), AEK Larnaca (Cyprus), FC Andorra (Andorra), FC Cartagena (Spain), Guangxi Pingguo Haliao (China), Portimonense (Portugal), Johor Darul Ta'zim (Malaysia)

## B. What is this case about?

6. This case concerns an infringement of article 22 of the FIFA Disciplinary Code, ed. 2025 (**FDC**) regarding forgery and falsification by the FAM and the Players, who, despite having no connection whatsoever with Malaysia, decided to start a naturalization and eligibility process with falsified documents with the sole objective to be able to play for the FAM national team. The Appellants were sanctioned by the FIFA Disciplinary Committee and are challenging this decision in these proceedings.

## C. Facts relevant to the case

### 1. The naturalization process performed by the Appellants before reaching out to FIFA

7. All the Players underwent a naturalization process before the Malaysian relevant authorities and were ultimately granted the Malaysian nationality. The process was supervised by the FAM. The Committee wished to note however that based on the evidence on file, it could not reconstruct the exact steps taken by the Malaysian authorities in respect of the Players' naturalization. This was because significant portions of the translations provided by the Appellants were unclear and a proper timeline was not established. The Committee also found that additional documentation was necessary so that this analysis could be completed in a proper fashion.
8. The Committee is however satisfied that the naturalization process generally comprised of the following, which was repeated for each of the Players:
- A first application was made to the Malaysian Ministry of Home Affairs (**MHA**) in respect of each of the Players (the **First Application**). The First Application concerned a special process for granting each Player with the Malaysian nationality based on art. 19 of the Malaysian Constitution. A copy of the documents/information included in the First Application was not provided in these proceedings, but this was referenced in subsequent letters from the MHA.

- b. The First Application was "considered for special approval" and the MHA instructed the Malaysian National Registration department to "receive and process" the Players' application for the Malaysian nationality after they received an entry permit to the country, which they did.
- c. The Players subsequently appeared before the Malaysian authorities and submitted a second application for their naturalization, this time presenting their entire paperwork with the relevant forms (the **Second Application**). The Committee is satisfied that there had to be two separate applications since the forms submitted in the Second Application have a posterior date than the letters issued by the MHA to the Malaysian National Registration department.
- d. With regards to the application forms on file, they are virtually identical for all the Players. The documents, which bear each of the Players' signature and thumbprint, contains the following wording in the section "H"<sup>2</sup> (translation presented by the Appellants from Malaysian to English):

*"I confirm that I have behaved well and that I have been resident in Malaysia for no less than 10 years and all information provided in this form is complete, true and correct in every detail. I fully understand that If I make a knowingly false statement, upon conviction, I can be jailed for two years or fined [...] or both."*

- e. Each application form also contained a cover letter, which indicated the documentation presented. The application files contained the following documents:
  - i. 3 recent passport-sized photographs with a colour background.
  - ii. application registration fee.
  - iii. Identity Card.
  - iv. Entry permit.
  - v. passport / travel document.
- f. None of the application files contained any ancestry documents in respect of the Players, i.e. birth certificates of parents or grandparents.

9. The application forms bear the following dates in respect of each of the Players:

<b>Player</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Application date</b>
Player 1	Gabriel Felipe Arrocha	17 March 2025
Player 2	Facundo Tomás Garcés Rattaro	1 June 2025
Player 3	Rodrigo Julián Holgado	3 June 2025
Player 4	Imanol Javier Machuca	3 June 2025
Player 5	João Vítor Brandão Figueiredo	3 June 2025
Player 6	Jon Irazabal Iraurgui	3 June 2025
Player 7	Héctor Alejandro Hevel Serrano	18 March 2025

<sup>2</sup> The translations are not identical in each of the forms. For the sake of clarity, the Committee employed the best translation available.

10. Each of the Players was issued a Malaysian passport with the following issuance dates:

<b>Player</b>	<b>Passport issuance date</b>
Player 1	18 March 2025
Player 2	3 June 2025
Player 3	3 June 2025
Player 4	3 June 2025
Player 5	3 June 2025
Player 6	3 June 2025
Player 7	18 March 2025

## **2. The eligibility enquiries submitted to FIFA**

11. On 19 March 2025, the FAM submitted to FIFA an "*INQUIRY REGARDING ELIGITIBLIY OF PLAYER, HECTOR ALEJANDRO HEVEL TO PLAY FOR MALASYA NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM*". In particular, the FAM enclosed the mentioned player's grandfather's birth certificate dated 06 January 2025 which indicated that the latter, Mr. Hendrik Jan Hevel, was born on 03 February 1933 in "Malacca Straights Settlements", now Malaysia. Said proceedings received the reference FPSD-18682.
12. On 20 March 2025, the FAM submitted to FIFA an "*INQUIRY REGARDING ELIGITIBLIY OF PLAYER, GABRIEL FELIPE AROCHA TO PLAY FOR MALASYA NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM*". In particular, the FAM enclosed the mentioned player's grandmother's birth certificate dated 03 January 2025 which indicated that the latter, Ms. María Belen Concepción Martin, was born on 17 May 1956 in Malacca, Federation of Malaya, now Malaysia. Said proceedings received the reference FPSD-18683.
13. On the same date, FIFA requested additional documentation from the FAM in respect of the case FPSD-18683.
14. Further to a request for additional documentation, on 24 March 2025, FIFA sent a letter to the FAM explaining, *inter alia*, that on the basis of the information provided, Player 7 appeared to comply with all the pertinent requirements and would be eligible to play for the FAM's representative team(s).
15. On 06 June 2025, the FAM submitted to FIFA an "*INQUIRY REGARDING ELIGITIBLIY OF PLAYER, FACUNDO TOMAS GARCES TO PLAY FOR MALASYA NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM*". Specifically, the FAM enclosed the mentioned player's grandfather's birth certificate dated 20 January 2025 which indicated that the former, Mr. Carlos Rogelio Garces Fernandez, was born on 29 May 1930 in "George Town straits settlements (British Malaya)". Said proceedings received the reference FPSD-19517.
16. On 06 June 2025, the FAM submitted to FIFA an "*INQUIRY REGARDING ELIGITIBLIY OF PLAYER, RODRIGO JULIAN HOLGADO TO PLAY FOR MALASYA NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM*". Specifically, the FAM enclosed the mentioned player's grandfather's birth certificate dated 27 June 1975 which indicated that the former, Mr. Omar Eli Holgado Gardon, was born on 27 July 1932 in George Town Straits Settlements, now Malaysia. Said proceedings received the reference FPSD-19518.

17. On 06 June 2025, the FAM submitted to FIFA an "*INQUIRY REGARDING ELIGITIBLIY OF PLAYER, IMANOL JAVIER MACHUCA TO PLAY FOR MALASYA NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM*". Particularly, the FAM enclosed the mentioned player's grandmother's birth certificate dated 29 January 2025 which indicated that the latter, Ms. Concepción Agueda Alaniz, was born on 16 August 1954 in "George Town Penang Federation of Malaya", now Malaysia. Said proceedings received the reference FPSD-19519.
18. On 06 June 2025, the FAM submitted to FIFA an "*INQUIRY REGARDING ELIGITIBLIY OF PLAYER, JOAO VITOR BRANDAO FIGUEIREDO TO PLAY FOR MALASYA NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM*". Specially, the FAM enclosed the mentioned player's grandmother's birth certificate dated 27 March 2017 which indicated that the former, Ms. Nair de Oliveira, was born on 26 September 1931 in Johore, British Malaya, now Malaysia. Said proceedings received the reference FPSD-19520.
19. On 06 June 2025, the FAM submitted to FIFA an "*INQUIRY REGARDING ELIGITIBLIY OF PLAYER, JON IRAZABAL IRAURGUI TO PLAY FOR MALASYA NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM*". In particular, the FAM enclosed the mentioned player's grandfather's birth certificate dated 08 January 2025 which indicated that the latter, Mr. Gregorio Irazabal y Lamiquiz was born on 24 February 1928 in Kuching<sup>3</sup>, Sarawak, now Malaysia. Said proceedings received the reference FPSD-19521.
20. On 06 June 2025, FIFA sent a letter to the FAM explaining, *inter alia*, that on the basis of the information provided, Player 3 appeared to comply with all the pertinent requirements and would be eligible to play for the FAM's representative team(s).
21. On 06 June 2025, FIFA sent a letter to the FAM explaining, *inter alia*, that on the basis of the information provided, Player 5 appeared to comply with all the pertinent requirements and would be eligible to play for the FAM's representative team(s).
22. On 06 June 2025, FIFA sent a letter to the FAM explaining, *inter alia*, that on the basis of the information provided, Player 6 appeared to comply with all the pertinent requirements and would be eligible to play for the FAM's representative team(s).
23. On 09 June 2025, after receiving the documentation requested on 20 March 2025, FIFA sent a letter to the FAM explaining, *inter alia*, that on the basis of the information provided, Player 1 appeared to comply with all the pertinent requirements and would be eligible to play for the FAM's representative team(s).
24. On 09 June 2025, FIFA sent a letter to the FAM explaining, *inter alia*, that on the basis of the information provided, Player 2 appeared to comply with all the pertinent requirements and would be eligible to play for the FAM's representative team(s).
25. On 09 June 2025, FIFA sent a letter to the FAM explaining, *inter alia*, that on the basis of the information provided, Player 4 appeared to comply with all the pertinent requirements and would be eligible to play for the FAM's representative team(s).

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<sup>3</sup> "Kuching" in accordance with the certified translation provided by the FAM.

26. The table below summarizes the proceedings in respect of the Players. It is to be noted that in each of the relevant proceedings, a copy of each of the respective Players' Malaysian passport was presented, with the following issuing dates:

Player	Case Ref.	Player Name	Passport issuance date	FIFA Letter Sent
Player 1	FPSD-18683	Gabriel Felipe Arrocha	18 March 2025	09 June 2025
Player 2	FPSD-19517	Facundo Tomás Garcés	3 June 2025	09 June 2025
Player 3	FPSD-19518	Rodrigo Julián Holgado	3 June 2025	09 June 2025
Player 4	FPSD-19519	Imanol Javier Machuca	3 June 2025	06 June 2025
Player 5	FPSD-19520	João Vítor Brandão Figueiredo	3 June 2025	09 June 2025
Player 6	FPSD-19521	Jon Irazabal Iraurgui	3 June 2025	06 June 2025
Player 7	FPSD-18682	Héctor Alejandro Hevel Serrano	18 March 2025	24 March 2025

27. It is to be noted that such letters issued by FIFA are a requirement for player registration for competitions organized by the Asian Football Confederation (**AFC**), to which the FAM is affiliated<sup>4</sup>.

### **3. Matches played by the Players**

28. The Players participated in the following matches for the representative team of the FAM:

- a. On 25 March 2025, Player 7 participated in the match Malaysia v. Nepal in the context of the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027™ Qualifiers Third Round Group F (final score 2:0). Player 7 scored at the 29<sup>th</sup> minute of that encounter.
- b. On 29 May 2025, Player 1 participated in the friendly Tier-1 match Malaysia v. Cape Verde (final score 1:1).
- c. On 10 June 2025, the Players participated in the match Malaysia v. Vietnam in the context of the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027™ Qualifiers Third Round Group F (final score 4:0). Both Player 5 and Player 3 scored, respectively at the 49<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> minute of that encounter.
- d. On 4 September 2025, the Players 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 participated in the friendly Tier-1 match Malaysia v. Singapore (final score 2:1). Player 5 scored at the 55<sup>th</sup> minute of that encounter.
- e. On 8 September 2025, the Players 1, 3, and 5 participated in the friendly Tier-1 match Malaysia v. Palestine (final score 1:0). Player 5 scored at the 3<sup>rd</sup> minute of that encounter.

### **4. Disciplinary proceedings and the Appealed Decision**

29. On 11 June 2025, FIFA received a complaint regarding the eligibility of the Players 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7. Specifically, the complainant submitted "*a formal complaint regarding reason to believe that certain foreign-born players are ineligible to represent the Malaysian National Football Team [...] their arrival in Malaysia and their commencement of playing for local clubs occurred relatively recently [...] Their*

<sup>4</sup> See [AFC Competitions Operations Manual \(ed. 2023\)](#), article 23 and Appendix 13, as well as art. 25, [Competition Regulations for the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027™](#).

*naturalization process and international debut took place within a questionable timeframe, raising significant questions about the validity of this process".*

30. In view of the above, the Secretariat to the FIFA Disciplinary Committee (the **Secretariat**) carried out investigations in accordance with art 30 (1) and 35 (5) of the FDC. In the scope of the investigations, the Secretariat was able to gather a copy of the original birth certificates in question which indicated the following:

Player	Grandparent	Birthplace	Birth certificate issuance date <sup>5</sup>
1	María Belen Concepción Martín	Santa Cruz de la Palma, Spain	20 June 2025
2	Carlos Rogelio Fernandez	Villa María Selva, Santa Fé de la Cruz, Argentina	13 June 2025
3	Omar Eli Holgado Gardon	Caseros, Buenos Aires, Argentina	16 July 2025
4	Concepción Agueda Alaniz	Roldán, Argentina	13 June 2025
5	Nair de Oliveira	Abre Campo, Brazil	12 June 2025
6	Gregorio Irazabal y Lamiquiz	Villa de Guernica y Luno, Viscaya, Spain	17 June 2025
7	Hendrik Jan Hevel	The Hague, Netherlands	25 August 2025

31. The results of the above investigations were set out in two reports (the **Investigatory Reports**). In particular, the Investigatory Reports list the following evidence, which contrasted to the one filed by the FAM respectively in the proceedings FPSD-18683, FPSD-19517, FPSD-19518, FPSD-19519, FPSD-19520, FPSD-19521 and FPSD-18682:

Player	Grandparent	Birthplace (doctored documents)	Birth certificate issuance date (doctored documents) <sup>6</sup>	Birthplace (original documents)	Birth certificate issuance date (original documents) <sup>7</sup>
1	María Belen Concepción Martín	Malacca, Malaysia	3 January 2025	Santa Cruz de la Palma, Spain	20 June 2025
2	Carlos Rogelio Fernandez	Penang, Malaysia	20 January 2025	Villa María Selva, Santa Fé de la Cruz, Argentina	13 June 2025
3	Omar Eli Holgado Gardon	George Town, Malaysia	24 June 1974	Caseros, Buenos Aires, Argentina	16 July 2025

<sup>5</sup> The indicated dates reflect the date the respective certificate was issued by the relevant public authority, following a request from the FIFA Administration. This date is not the date in which such relevant authorities originally registered the concerned birth.

<sup>6</sup> The indicated dates reflect the date the respective certificate was issued by the relevant public authority. This date is not the date in which such relevant authorities originally registered the concerned birth.

<sup>7</sup> See footnote no. 5.

4	Concepción Agueda Alaniz	Penang, Malaysia	29 January 2025	Roldán, Argentina	13 June 2025
5	Nair de Oliveira	Johore, Malaysia	27 March 2017	Abre Campo, Brazil	12 June 2025
6	Gregorio Irazabal y Lamiquiz	Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia	8 January 2025	Villa de Guernica y Luno, Viscaya, Spain	17 June 2025
7	Hendrik Jan Hevel	Mallaca Straits Settlements, Malaysia	6 January 2025	The Hague, Netherlands	25 August 2025

32. In this context, the Investigatory Reports outlined the following conclusion:

*"Based on the evidence on file, the Secretariat is comfortably satisfied to establish that the documents [submitted by the FAM in the proceedings FPSD-18682, FPSD-18683, FPSD-19517, FPSD-19518, FPSD-19519, FPSD-19520, and FPSD-19521] are forged and that the Players have made use of these documents to evade and circumvent the pertinent FIFA Regulations in order to be eligible to represent the team of the FAM."*

33. On 22 August 2025, disciplinary proceedings were opened against the FAM and Players 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 for the potential breach of art. 22 FDC. On 28 August 2025, disciplinary proceedings were opened against Player 7 for the same potential breach.
34. The Appellants were notified of the respective opening letters by the Secretariat via the FIFA Legal Portal. Further to a request for an extension, a deadline until 22 September 2025 was given for the Appellants to present their position.
35. On 22 September 2025, the FAM presented its statement of defense and bundle of evidence. The Players, for their part, presented via the FAM on the same date a signed statement reading as follows:

*"We, the undersigned players, hereby declare that we endorse with the arguments and position filed by the Football Association of Malaysia ("FAM") in connection with the proceedings FDD-24394."*

36. On 22 September 2025, following the receipt of the Appellants' submissions, the Secretariat informed the Appellants that the matter had been referred for adjudication on 25 September 2025 by the Deputy Chairperson of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee sitting as a single judge.
37. The terms of the decision of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee were notified to the Appellants on 26 September 2025. The FIFA Disciplinary Committee found that the Appellants had violated article 22 of the FDC for having used forged and/or falsified documents in FIFA proceedings and sanctioned the Appellants (the **Appealed Decision**). The Appealed Decision can be summarized as follows:
- The Appealed Decision first affirms jurisdiction pursuant to Articles 2(1), 22, and 55 FDC, noting that the Appellants did not contest competence. It applies the 2025 edition of the FDC retroactively under Article 4(2), given that the relevant provisions on forgery remain identical to prior editions and allow for milder sanctions where applicable.

- b. On the merits, the Appealed Decision reaffirms the principle of strict liability enshrined in Article 22 FDC, which sanctions not only the act of forgery but also the use of forged documents, irrespective of intent or knowledge. It explains that the provision is deliberately broad, designed to preclude defenses based on ignorance or procedural compliance, and to uphold the integrity of football governance.
- c. Turning to the evidentiary record, the Appealed Decision relies extensively on the Investigatory Reports, which juxtapose the doctored birth certificates submitted by FAM against original civil records obtained from Spain, Argentina, Brazil, and the Netherlands. The discrepancies are stark: the forged documents systematically altered the grandparents' birthplaces to Malaysian localities, thereby fabricating a genealogical nexus essential for eligibility under the Regulations Governing the Application of the Statutes (**RGAS**). The Appealed Decision underscores that these falsifications were not incidental but constituted a deliberate mechanism to circumvent eligibility rules.
- d. Further, the Appealed Decision rejected the Appellants' argument that the violation was merely formal and devoid of substantive effect. The Appealed Decision reasons that the forged documents were *sine qua non* for the Players' eligibility, enabling their participation in an official AFC Asian Cup qualifier match, where two of them scored decisive goals. This demonstrates that forgery produced tangible sporting consequences, thereby aggravating the gravity of the offense. The Appealed Decision further dismisses the contention that FIFA's prior correspondence confirming apparent eligibility exonerates the Appellants, clarifying that such confirmation was conditional upon the veracity of the documents submitted at the time.
- e. In assessing culpability, the Appealed Decision finds that FAM's reliance on Malaysian authorities and its failure to independently verify original records falls short of the diligence required in FIFA proceedings. The fact that FIFA could procure the original documents without impediment underscores the Respondents' lack of scrutiny. The Appealed Decision characterizes this conduct as a breach of the fundamental principles of fair play and transparency, noting that forgery in eligibility matters constitutes a form of cheating, which erodes trust in the fairness of competitions and jeopardizes the very essence of football as an activity founded on honesty and transparency.
- f. By invoking precedents such as the FEGUIFUT case and Chabab Mrirt, the Appealed Decision situates its reasoning within a consistent jurisprudential framework that treats document falsification as an egregious violation warranting severe sanctions.
- g. The Appealed Decision concludes that both FAM and the Players infringed Article 22 FDC by using forged documents in FIFA proceedings. As to the sanctions under Articles 6 and 25 FDC, the Appealed Decision weighs mitigating factors—such as a previously clean disciplinary record—against aggravating circumstances, notably the deliberate and successful circumvention of eligibility rules and the consequential impact on an official match. The resulting sanctions—a CHF 350,000 fine on FAM (calculated on the basis of CHF 50,000 per player involved in the fraudulent use of documentation) and, for each Player, a CHF 2,000 fine and a twelve-month suspension from all football-related activities—are deemed

proportionate, necessary, and aligned with FIFA's zero-tolerance policy toward fraudulent conduct.

38. Subsequently to the notification of the operative part of the Appealed Decision, the Appellants timely requested its grounds in accordance with art. 54 FDC, which were then notified on 6 October 2025.

## **5. Proceedings before the FIFA Appeal Committee**

39. The relevant statements of appeal were filed as follows:
  - Players 2, 3 and 4: 8 October 2025. These appeals were consolidated under reference FDD-25550.
  - Players 1, 5, 6 and 7: 9 October 2025. These appeals were consolidated under reference FDD-25566.
  - FAM: 9 October 2025. This appeal was given the reference FDD-25574.
40. The relevant appeal briefs were all filed on 14 October 2025, each accompanied by the proof of payment of the appeal fee, made to FIFA's bank account within the deadline of 8 days set by art. 61(6) FDC.
41. It is to be noted that the Players filed a request for provisional measures to stay the Appealed Decision. Said request was rejected by the Chairperson of the Appeal Committee on 16 October 2025.
42. Ahead of the hearing conducted in these proceedings, the FAM filed an unsolicited submission with FIFA reporting that it had implemented certain measures to address the issues identified in the handling of eligibility files. Contextually, on 17 October 2025, the FAM General Secretary was provisionally suspended, a measure adopted to ensure the integrity and independence of the review process and to facilitate a thorough and unimpeded assessment of the record by external reviewers. In parallel, FAM appointed an independent committee chaired by former Chief Justice Tun Md Raus Sharif to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the circumstances at issue and to propose any necessary reforms. The committee's work will remain fully independent of FAM; its composition will not include any FAM officials, employees, or related individuals, and the chair has been given full authority to select its membership.
43. On 30 October 2025, a hearing was held in the matter both in the FIFA offices in Miami, Florida, USA and via videoconference. The Appellants and their respective counsel were in attendance together with the Committee (Chairperson and members), as well staff of the Secretariat to the FIFA Judicial Bodies. After the hearing, the Appellants confirmed that their right to be heard had been fully respected.
44. For the sake of good procedural order and efficiency, the Committee decided to produce one single decision comprising the three appeals filed. The operative part of the Committee's decision was communicated to the Appellants on 3 November 2025. The Appellants subsequently requested the grounds of the decision within the deadline set forth under art. 54 FDC.

## II. APPELLANTS' POSITION

45. The position of the Appellants is summarized hereafter. It comprises both the written statements filed before the Committee as well as the evidence and submissions presented during the hearing of 30 October 2025.

### A. The Players

#### 1. Factual background

##### a) Players' ancestry and naturalization process

46. The Players state that in early 2025, they were contacted by representatives of FAM via their agents who informed them that they were eligible to acquire Malaysian nationality based on ancestral ties. FAM presented this opportunity as a legitimate and structured pathway for the Players to represent Malaysia at the international level. All Players expressed that they were interested in playing for the FAM.

47. The Players did not identify which person from the FAM contacted the Players' respective agents/friends.

48. The Players, unfamiliar with the technicalities of FIFA's eligibility rules, accepted the proposal in good faith, viewing it as a professional opportunity. They did not initiate the process themselves but responded affirmatively to FAM's invitation and followed its instructions. At the hearing, the Players stated that their understanding of the FIFA eligibility rules consisted of possessing a passport from Malaysia and not having played for another national team.

49. The Players explained that, contextually, FAM requested them to provide various personal documents, including their own passports and birth certificates, as well as the birth certificates of their parents and grandparents. The Players complied by submitting original documents to intermediaries—agents or friends—who were in contact with FAM. These exchanges were later notarized and submitted as evidence in the appeals, as follows:

- **Player 1 (Gabriel Felipe Arrocha):** On 7 January 2025, Mr. Arrocha delivered the requested documents, including the birth certificate of his grandmother Ms. Maria Belen Concepcion Martin, to his agent Mr. Ivan Cristovinho during a meal, together with his father. Mr. Cristovinho was in contact with FAM and subsequently handed the documents to the latter.
- **Player 2 (Facundo Tomás Garcés):** On 21 January 2025, Mr. Garcés sent the birth certificate of his grandfather Mr. Carlos Rogelio Garcés Fernández via text message (WhatsApp) to his friend Mr. Federico Raspanti, who was in direct contact with FAM.
- **Player 3 (Rodrigo Julián Holgado):** On 25 April 2025, Mr. Holgado sent the birth certificate of his grandfather Mr. Omar Eli Holgado Gardon via text message (WhatsApp) to his agent Mr. Nicolás Puppo, who was liaising with FAM.

- **Player 4 (Imanol Javier Machuca):** On 4 April 2025 and again on 8 April 2025, Mr. Machuca sent, via text message (WhatsApp), the birth certificate of his grandmother Ms. Concepción Agueda Alaniz to Mr. Federico Raspanti, the same intermediary engaged by Player 2 in direct contact with FAM.
  - **Player 5 (João Vítor Brandão Figueiredo):** On 9 May 2025, Mr. Figueiredo sent the requested documents, including the birth certificate of his grandmother Ms. Nair de Oliveira, by group chat (WhatsApp) to his agents Mr. Frederico Moraes and Mr. Flavio Alexandre, who were in contact with FAM.
  - **Player 6 (Jon Irazabal Iraurgui):** On 9 January 2025, Mr. Irazabal sent the requested documents, including the birth certificate of his grandfather Mr. Gregorio Irazabal y Lamiquiz, via text message (WhatsApp) to his agent Mr. Ronald Vega, who was in contact with FAM.
  - **Player 7 (Héctor Alejandro Hevel Serrano):** On 23 March 2025, Mr. Hevel sent the birth certificate of his grandfather Mr. Hendrik Jan Hevel via text message (WhatsApp) to his agent Mr. Ronald Vega, who was in direct contact with FAM, the same engaged by Player 6.
50. The Players, while they claim that they never read, checked or in any way verified any of the documents, emphasize in their written submissions that these documents were authentic and unaltered at the time these were given to their respective agents. They argue that any manipulation occurred after the documents were handed over to FAM and without their knowledge or involvement. Except for Player 1, who handed over the documents in person to his agent and has not produced a copy of the documentation in these proceedings, the other Players filed as evidence the corresponding screenshots and WhatsApp conversation with their agents, all of which depict birth certificates of their grandparents, and none of which lists a place of birth in Malaysia (or territories that now comprise the country of Malaysia).
51. At the hearing, all Players cited their agents as the source of the opportunity to play for the Malaysian national team. They all equally confirmed that the necessary documentation, namely their own birth certificates as well as those of their parents and grandparents, was procured by their family members and later sent to Players, who then presented them to their respective agents/friends without further verification. It is noted also that the Players' claim to Malaysian ancestry was generally based on family hearsay rather than verified records.
52. By the same token, all Players admitted at the hearing that they did not read any of the application documents submitted to the Malaysian government, including the part which concerned the declaration that they had lived for 10 years in Malaysia. The counsels for the Appellants explained in this regard that the documentation was only in Malaysian language, and that the Players' Malaysian nationality had not been granted on account of residence.
53. The Players explained that following the submission of documents, FAM undertook the bureaucratic steps necessary for the Players' naturalization. This included internal checks by Malaysian authorities and the completion of formal application forms. They went on to state that after filing the relevant applications, the Players were officially granted Malaysian nationality and received valid Malaysian passports.

54. The Players assert the process was entirely managed by FAM and its staff as well as the Players' own agents. They admit having signed the application documents and appearing before the Malaysian authorities but deny having read them or made themselves aware of the content of the documents they signed. On this note, the Players confirmed at the hearing that some of the documents were in Malaysian, which they do not speak, and that no translation was procured or asked by the Players.

55. In this respect, the following statements of the Players made during the hearing are noteworthy:

- **Player 1, Mr. Arrocha:** Player 1 initially claimed his grandmother was born in Spain but corrected himself, saying then Malaysia ("My grandfather was born in Venezuela and my grandmother in Spain... I mean Malaysia, sorry"<sup>8</sup>). He admitted he was present when his father gave his family documents to his agent but did not review them, stating: "*I wasn't even interested.*" He added: "*Por lo que me han contado en familia, ella nació en Malaysia*" (From what my family told me, she was born in Malaysia). He expressed confusion about discrepancies in birth certificates, saying he relied on his agent and those around him. Player 1 was asked whether he had inquired with his agent after learning about the falsified documents and related sanctions. He responded **no**, stating that he trusted his agent and did not know what had happened. He emphasized his ignorance of the process and lack of involvement.
- **Player 2, Mr. Garcés:** Player 2 testified that he was approached by his agent, Federico Raspanti, with the opportunity to represent Malaysia based on a supposed family connection. He acknowledged limited knowledge of his grandfather's background, having met him only briefly in Argentina, and confirmed that both his parents were born in Argentina. At the agent's request, he submitted birth certificates for himself, his father, and his grandfather, without reviewing the documents, relying entirely on his agent's instructions. Crucially, Player 2 admitted that he did not reach out to his agent or the FAM after learning of the sanction. When asked directly whether he had questioned his agent about the use of conflicting birth certificates—one showing his grandfather born in Argentina and another in Malaysia—he responded "no," stating that it was not his responsibility ("no me compete") to verify such matters. He emphasized that he trusted the people around him and was unaware of any wrongdoing until after the disciplinary action was taken. He maintained that he submitted original documents and denied any involvement in falsification, attributing the issue to errors made by the FAM.
- **Player 3, Mr. Holgado:** Player 3 described the opportunity to play for the Malaysian national team as as "*una oportunidad para mi carrera*" (an opportunity for my career). He stated that his father was born in Argentina, and he believed his grandfather was born in Malaysia, based on what his father told him. Player 3 confirmed he never visited Malaysia and was unaware of any family there. He confirmed that his agent had contacted him about the possibility and that he did not review the birth certificates his father sent. Player 3 confirmed he did not reach out to his agent or the FAM after the sanction. He stated that he trusted his agent, who had always managed his career, and did not inquire further about the documents or the process. He emphasized that he was unaware of any wrongdoing and had no direct contact with the FAM until he arrived to play.

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<sup>8</sup> Free translation from Spanish to English.

- **Player 4, Mr. Machuca:** Player 4 testified that his grandmother was reportedly born in Malaysia. He acknowledged receiving the proposal from his agent and sending documents without checking them. He knew his grandmother personally but did not verify her birth certificate. Player 4 was asked explicitly whether he had questioned his agent about how a falsified birth certificate came to be used. He replied **no**, stating he had not asked and was unaware of the issue until the suspension. He reiterated that he had sent original documents and had not falsified anything.
- **Player 5, Mr. Brandão:** Player 5 said both parents were Brazilian and that his grandfather was from Brazil, and his grandmother from Malaysia, though she currently lives in São Paulo and he sees her once a year. Brandão has played for a Malaysian club for three months, after five years in Turkey. He confirmed the opportunity to play for the Malaysian national team was presented by his agent.
- **Player 6: Mr. Irazabal:** Player 6 stated his grandfather was born in Malaysia. He switched agencies when a new agent offered this opportunity, namely to play for the Malaysian national team, firing his previous representation.
- **Player 7: Mr. Hevel:** Player 7 began playing for a Malaysian club in June 2025 after stints in Portugal and China. He claimed his grandfather was born in Malaysia. He admitted he never lived in Malaysia for ten years, despite signing a document stating otherwise. He signed without reading, following instructions from an unspecified person. Player 7 was asked whether he had followed up with his agent after discovering that a falsified birth certificate had been used. He said **no**, explaining that he had not taken any steps to check on the progress of his citizenship application or the documents submitted. He trusted his agent and was focused on his football commitments.

**b) Eligibility confirmation, match participation, and disciplinary proceedings**

56. The Players explained that after receiving their passports, FAM initiated the eligibility process with FIFA. Subsequently in March and June 2025, FIFA formally confirmed that the Players met the criteria to represent Malaysia. On 10 June 2025, all seven Players participated in an official match against Vietnam in the AFC Asian Cup 2027 qualifiers.
57. The Players then argued that following day, the Vietnam Football Federation filed a complaint alleging the ineligibility of certain foreign-born players, which triggered FIFA's disciplinary proceedings<sup>9</sup>.
58. The Players underscore that they were passive participants in the eligibility process as well, relying entirely on FAM's representations and procedural handling, and that their role was limited to providing original documents. They claim to have had no visibility into the documents ultimately submitted to FIFA by the FAM and were unaware of any falsification. They stress that they acted in good faith, trusting a FIFA member association and the Malaysian government.

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<sup>9</sup> The Committee notes this assertion is inaccurate, as the complaint lodged with FIFA was not filed by the Vietnamese Football Federation.

59. As to the disciplinary proceedings, while the Players confirmed that they all signed the endorsement to the FAM's position filed in the first instance proceedings, they claimed they were never properly informed of the proceedings entailed. They further argue that they did not read or enquire about the statement of defense filed by the FAM in the first instance proceedings, which they now regret, acknowledging that they did not seek independent legal advice at the time. They assert that they were misled into believing the process was administrative and routine, and that they were not properly informed of the disciplinary risks involved.

## **2. Lack of Jurisdiction of the single judge of the Disciplinary Committee**

60. The Players argue that the Appealed Decision is procedurally flawed due to the improper composition of the adjudicating body. Specifically, they contend that the single judge lacked jurisdiction under Article 57 of the FDC, which limits the scope of decisions that may be rendered by a member of the Disciplinary Committee ruling alone. They argue that the sanctions imposed—a 12-month suspension from all football-related activities and a CHF 350,000 fine FAM—exceed the thresholds permitted (i.e., suspensions of up to three months and fines not exceeding CHF 100,000).
61. They further argue that the matter should have been adjudicated by a panel of judges due to its complexity and severity. The Appellants cite Swiss constitutional law (Article 30 of the Swiss Constitution) and jurisprudence from the Swiss Federal Tribunal (SFT 6B\_226/2015) to support the principle that decisions rendered by improperly constituted judicial bodies are null and void. They also refer to CAS 1783<sup>10</sup>, where a CAS panel invalidated a decision made by an improperly authorized authority.

## **3. No Breach of Article 22 FDC**

62. The Players deny any violation of Article 22 FDC. Their arguments are structured around the absence of both the objective and subjective elements required for a finding of misconduct.
- a) **No Actus Reus (Objective Element)**
63. The Players assert that they did not forge or use any falsified documents. They provided original birth certificates of their grandparents to FAM, which were allegedly altered without their knowledge or involvement. They emphasize that they were not involved in the submission of documents to FIFA in the eligibility checks and were not copied on any correspondence between FAM and FIFA regarding their eligibility. The only document they used was their Malaysian passport, which was lawfully issued by the Malaysian authorities.
64. They argue that the Appealed Decision failed to establish any direct act of use attributable to the Players. They cite the definition of "use" from the Oxford English Dictionary to emphasize that it requires a positive act, not passive involvement or indirect benefit.

b) **No Mens Rea (Subjective Element)**

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<sup>10</sup> Arbitration CAS 2009/A/1783 Rob Woestenborghs v. International Triathlon Union (ITU), award of 14 October 2009.

65. The Players argue that they acted in good faith and were unaware of any misconduct. They rely on Article 8(1) FDC, which requires either intent or negligence for individual liability. They contend that they trusted FAM—a FIFA member association—to handle the naturalization and eligibility process, and that they had no reason to suspect irregularities.
66. They cite CAS 2018/A/5769, where the panel held that the offence of forgery or falsification under the FIFA Ethics Code cannot be committed negligently and requires at least indirect intent (*dolus eventualis*). They also refer to CAS 2023/A/9637, which confirmed that disciplinary liability under similar provisions requires either deliberate or negligent conduct, and cannot be based on strict liability.

#### **c) Rejection of “Ultimate Beneficiary” Theory**

67. The Appealed Decision reasoned that the Players were “ultimate beneficiaries” of the forged documents, and therefore liable under Article 22 FDC. The Players strongly reject this interpretation, arguing that the concept of “ultimate beneficiary” is not codified in the FDC and its application violates the principles of legal certainty, personal liability, and predictability. They cite CAS 2022/A/8915-8918-8919-8920, which emphasized that disciplinary provisions must be interpreted according to statutory principles, beginning with the literal text. They also reference CAS 2024/A/10910, which reaffirmed that in disciplinary matters, especially those affecting an athlete’s livelihood, a particularly strict standard of clarity must be applied.
68. The Players argue that the real beneficiary of the forged documents was the FAM, which sought to enhance its national team’s competitiveness. They maintain that they did not actively pursue eligibility and were merely responding to FAM’s invitation and instructions. They further cite CAS 2010/A/2266 (N. & V. v. UEFA) to support the principle of personal liability, which requires evidence that a particular individual committed a rule infringement through their own actions or omissions.

#### **4. Disproportionality of Sanctions**

69. On a subsidiary basis, the Players argue that the sanctions imposed are manifestly excessive and disproportionate in light of the circumstances. They invoke Article 25 FDC, which requires the FIFA judicial bodies to consider both objective and subjective elements of the offence, as well as aggravating and mitigating circumstances.

##### **a) Mitigating Factors and improper aggravating circumstances**

70. The Players identify several mitigating factors:
- They did not forge or knowingly use falsified documents.
  - They were unaware of the alleged misconduct and relied on FAM.
  - They played only one match for the Malaysian national team.
  - They have clean disciplinary records.
  - They did not gain any personal benefit beyond national team selection.
71. They argue that the Appealed Decision failed to give proper weight to these factors and merely acknowledged them without applying them to reduce the sanction. They cite CAS 2018/A/6072 (Nyantakyi v. FIFA), which held that disciplinary measures must correspond to the degree of

personal culpability and that mitigating elements such as cooperation, good faith, and absence of prior offences compel a tangible reduction in sanction.

72. At the same time, the Players argue that the Appealed Decision improperly applied aggravating factors by double-counting the seriousness of the offence. They contend that references to “undermining the integrity of football” and “attacks on the core principles of the game” are inherent to the offence of forgery and cannot be used to escalate the sanction further.

#### **b) Comparative Precedents**

73. The Players cite several precedents to demonstrate that the sanctions imposed on them are disproportionate compared to similar cases:
- Timor-Leste case (2023): The federation was fined and expelled, but the players were not sanctioned.
  - Equatorial Guinea cases (2016 & 2017): players received 10-match bans limited to national team fixtures.
  - CAS 2022/A/9175-9176: The panel emphasized that players acting in good faith cannot be held to a higher evidentiary burden than the association.
74. They also reference FIFA decisions ref. FDD-14433 and FDD-11840, where sanctions were directed primarily at federations and limited to representative matches.

#### **c) Alternative Sanction Proposal**

75. If the Committee finds any residual liability, the Players propose an alternative sanction:
- A fine of CHF 2,000 or higher.
  - A short suspension limited to national team matches.
  - Suspension of any club-related ban, subject to a probationary period under Article 27 FDC.
76. They argue that this alternative would preserve FIFA's deterrent objectives without imposing an indiscriminate and unjust exclusion from all football-related activities.

### **5. Request for Relief**

77. The following relief was requested by the Players:

On a provisional basis:

To immediately award the provisional measures requested by the Players:

i. That FIFA is ordered:

- (i) to stay the entire execution of the Appealed Decision; and
- (ii) as a consequence, to lift the ban against the Players so that they can train, play and perform any football-related activity until a final and binding decision is issued in this matter;

Or, on a subsidiary basis:

ii. That FIFA is ordered:

- (i) to stay the execution of the Appealed Decision in respect to any football-related activity to be performed by the Players outside the context of their FAM national team and, in particular, the ones to be performed with or in connection with their respective employers-clubs; and
- (ii) as a consequence, to lift the ban against the Players so that they can train, play and perform any football-related activity outside the context of the FAM national team and, in particular the ones of their employers-clubs, until a final and binding decision is issued in this matter.

On the merits:

i. That the appeal filed by the Players is upheld.

ii. That the Appealed Decision is annulled and definitively set aside due to lack of competence for what concerns the sanctions imposed, which fall outside the scope of the Single Judge of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee;

Alternatively:

That the Appealed Decision is sent back to the FIFA Disciplinary Committee to be heard by a panel of judges, for the same reason, for a new decision.

iii. That, as a consequence of point ii, the sanctions imposed on the Appellants under the Appealed Decision shall be annulled so that the consequent fine shall be removed and the ban to carry out any football-related activity shall be immediately and definitively lifted and not applied until a new decision is reached by the FIFA Disciplinary Committee.

Alternatively:

iv. If the FIFA Appeal Committee considers the FIFA Disciplinary Committee had the competence to issue the sanctions contained in the Appealed Decision, to issue a new decision holding that:

- a. The Players did not forge nor use falsified documents, setting aside and annulling the Appealed Decision in their respect;

Alternatively:

- b. The Players did not act with intent or negligence regarding the use of falsified documents, setting aside and annulling the Appealed Decision in their respect;

Alternatively:

- c. If the Players are considered to have used forged documents with intent or negligently, to issue a new decision with a proportionate sanction, which should be limited to:

- (i) only the fine of CHF 2,000 or higher; plus, if a suspension would also be imposed,
- (ii) such shall be the shortest ban and limited to matches and competitions with the FAM national teams; and
- (iv) any sanction, or just the possible part on activities and competitions with their football club, be suspended and subject to a probationary period at the discretion of the FIFA Appeal Committee.

v. That FIFA shall bear all the procedural costs of this procedure and the appeal fees are reimbursed to the Players.

## **B. The FAM**

### **1. As to the facts – naturalization and documentation process**

78. The FAM explained that it initiated the naturalization and eligibility verification process for a group of foreign-born players in late 2024 and early 2025. This process was undertaken in accordance with standard practices among national football federations, particularly in cases involving players with ancestral ties to the country. FAM's objective was to determine whether the players, through their alleged Malaysian lineage, could lawfully acquire Malaysian citizenship and thereby become eligible to represent Malaysia in international football competitions.
79. This was further confirmed by the representative of the FAM at the hearing, Mr. Rob Friend, who indicated that the FAM implemented a heritage search plan as part of a broader initiative to improve the standards of the FAM's senior team under all technical perspectives. Mr. Friend explained that he works in a consultant role to the FAM, based in Canada and travelling to Malaysia for matchdays, and stated that his role was to help with that project, mainly in the areas of improvements for coaching and technical staff. He stated that all the processes regarding naturalization of players was managed by the FAM in Malaysia directly and that he was tasked with assisting with the proceedings since their opening on 22 August 2025. He stated he was not aware of any wrongdoing and was not involved in any of the processes until the cited date.
80. In collaboration with agents and intermediaries, the FAM conducted preliminary assessments and engaged with the Malaysian Ministry of Home Affairs and the National Registration Department (JPN). The process began with the submission of documentation by the players' representatives, including foreign passports, personal birth certificates, and the birth certificates of their grandparents—documents that were essential to establish the players' ancestral nexus to Malaysia.
81. On 7 February 2025, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued formal invitations to two of the Players to attend the Immigration Department for Entry Permit procedures and to appear before JPN for citizenship registration. These players complied with the directives, and on 16 March 2025, their Entry Permits were approved. The following day, they completed the citizenship process, passed the requisite Bahasa Malaysia language tests, took the oath of allegiance, and were issued Certificates of Citizenship. On 18 March 2025, they received their Malaysian identity cards (ICs) and passports.
82. Between January and May 2025, FAM continued to collect documentation from the remaining Players' agents, including the foreign birth certificates of their grandparents. On 23 May 2025, the Ministry of Home Affairs extended similar invitations to the remaining Players. Their Entry Permits were approved on 29 May 2025, and between 1 and 3 June 2025, they completed the citizenship process, received their ICs and passports, and were formally recognized as Malaysian nationals.
83. Throughout this period, FAM maintained active communication with JPN, requesting verification of the authenticity and validity of the foreign birth certificates submitted. These requests were made

on 20 March 2025 for the first two players and on 4 June 2025 for the remaining five. Concurrently, FAM submitted eligibility inquiries to FIFA on 19 and 20 March 2025 for the initial players, and on 6 June 2025 for the others. FIFA responded by requesting additional documentation, which the FAM promptly provided.

84. At the hearing, the FAM underlined that documents issued by the Malaysian government confirm the birth of the Players' grandparents in Malaysia, and that pursuant to CAS case law, it is not for FIFA to review these documents. On this note, several birth certificates are filed by the FAM in support of this argument. These were examined in the considerations section of this decision.
85. On 24 March 2025 and between 6–9 June 2025, FIFA issued letters confirming the principle of eligibility for the players based on the documentation submitted. These letters, however, were informational in nature and contingent upon the accuracy of the documents provided. On 12 June 2025, following responses from JPN, the FAM confirmed that the particulars in the foreign birth certificates matched the information previously submitted to FIFA.
86. FAM emphasizes that the Players' naturalization was completed prior to the eligibility confirmations and was based on sovereign determinations by the Malaysian authorities. The association asserts that the documentation process was conducted in good faith and in accordance with domestic legal procedures. The subsequent issuance of Malaysian birth certificates for the players' grandparents by JPN further substantiated the players' ancestral links to Malaysia and validated the eligibility claims made by FAM.
87. It is to be noted that in support of the above, the FAM has presented a timeline drafted by the FAM itself, in a letter containing its letterhead.

## **2. Procedural Invalidity of the Appealed Decision**

88. The FAM submits that the Appealed Decision is procedurally invalid and must be declared null and void due to a manifest excess of jurisdiction. The decision was issued by a single judge acting *ultra vires*, in contravention of the express limitations set forth under Article 57 of the FDC.
89. The FAM argues that Article 57 FDC delineates the scope of authority conferred upon a single judge within the Disciplinary Committee. It provides that the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson may adjudicate alone only in cases involving suspensions not exceeding five matches or three months, and fines not exceeding CHF 100,000. In the present matter, the sanctions imposed—a twelve-month suspension on each of the seven players and a CHF 350,000 fine on FAM—clearly exceed these statutory thresholds. As such, the decision required adjudication by a properly constituted panel of the Disciplinary Committee, and its issuance by a single judge constitutes a procedural irregularity of the highest order. Under Swiss law, which governs FIFA as an association domiciled in Zurich, the principle of adjudication by a competent tribunal is enshrined in Article 30 of the Swiss Federal Constitution. This provision guarantees the right of parties to have their cases heard by a legally constituted and competent judicial body. Jurisprudence of the Swiss Federal Tribunal (SFT) has consistently held that decisions rendered by an organ lacking jurisdiction are void and must be annulled. Notable precedents include ATF 5A\_205/2013, SFT 144 IV 362, and SFT 145 III 436, all of which affirm that procedural competence is a prerequisite to the validity of any adjudicative act.

90. The FAM argues that CAS has similarly recognized the principle of nullity in cases involving *ultra vires* adjudication. In CAS 2009/A/1783 and CAS 2019/A/6547, the panels annulled decisions rendered by bodies that failed to comply with the procedural requirements of the applicable regulatory framework. These decisions underscore the imperative of procedural regularity and reinforce the notion that disciplinary measures must be imposed by duly authorized bodies.
91. In light of the foregoing, the FAM contends that the Appealed Decision is vitiated by a fundamental procedural defect. The exercise of disciplinary authority by a single judge in excess of the jurisdictional limits prescribed by Article 57 FDC renders the decision void *ab initio*. Accordingly, the FIFA Appeal Committee is invited to declare the decision null and void and to lift all sanctions imposed therein. Should the Committee deem it necessary to revisit the merits, the matter must be remitted for *de novo* consideration by a properly composed panel in accordance with Article 63(3) FDC.

### **3. As to the Merits**

#### **a) Absence of Mens Rea in the Players' conduct**

92. FAM's defense on the merits begins with a doctrinal challenge to the application of Article 22(1) of the FIFA Disciplinary Code (FDC), which proscribes forgery, falsification, and the use of forged or falsified documents in football-related activities. The association argues that the FIFA Disciplinary Committee erred in attributing liability to the players without establishing the requisite mental element—*mens rea*—necessary to sustain a finding of culpability under this provision.
93. FAM submits that Article 22(1) FDC must be interpreted in line with general principles of disciplinary and criminal law, which require that sanctions for fraud-based offenses be predicated on intentional conduct, knowledge, or at minimum, willful blindness. The association rejects any construction of Article 22 that would impose strict liability on natural persons for the mere submission of documents later found to be altered, particularly where such individuals had no role in the alteration and no awareness of its occurrence.
94. In support of this position, FAM relies on the jurisprudence of the CAS, specifically the award in CAS 2018/A/5769. In that case, the panel interpreted a materially equivalent provision in the FIFA Code of Ethics and held that allegations of forgery and falsification require proof of fraudulent intent. The panel emphasized that mere negligence or administrative oversight does not suffice to establish the mental element required for the finding of forgery. The reasoning in CAS 2018/A/5769 is invoked by FAM as persuasive authority, given the analogous structure and purpose of the provisions in question.
95. Applying this standard to the facts of the present case, FAM argues that the Players' conduct does not meet the threshold for liability under Article 22(1) FDC: the Players, according to the evidentiary record, merely provided original civil documents to their agents and intermediaries for the purpose of pursuing naturalization under Malaysian law. These documents were not altered by the Players themselves, nor did they instruct or knowingly permit any alteration. The Players were not involved in the administrative processes surrounding eligibility filings and lacked the technical expertise to detect discrepancies or understand the evidentiary requirements of FIFA's eligibility framework.

96. FAM further contends that the Players acted in good faith and in accordance with standard practice, relying on the FAM and its staff to handle the documentation and liaise with FIFA. There is no evidence that any of the Players procured, fabricated, or knowingly submitted falsified documents. Nor is there any indication that the Players were briefed on the mechanics of eligibility filings or the legal implications of document discrepancies. As such, the FAM maintains that the Players' conduct cannot be characterized as "use" of forged or falsified documents within the meaning of Article 22(1) FDC.
97. To frame such conduct as sanctionable would, in FAM's view, stretch the provision beyond its intended scope and effectively impose vicarious liability on players for administrative actions over which they exercised no control. This would contravene the principle of individual culpability, which is foundational to FIFA's disciplinary framework and reflected in Article 25 FDC, which requires that sanctions be tailored to the degree of fault and the circumstances of the case.
98. In conclusion, FAM submits that the Players' conduct lacks the subjective element necessary to establish a violation of Article 22(1) FDC. The absence of intent, knowledge, or willful blindness precludes a finding of forgery, falsification, or use, and the sanctions imposed on the players must therefore be lifted in their entirety.

**b) Limited and Isolated conduct by FAM officials**

99. FAM acknowledges that certain members of its secretariat, acting under time constraints and in anticipation of official confirmations from Malaysian authorities, made administrative adjustments to foreign birth certificates. These alterations were undertaken without the knowledge or authorization of the Players, the FAM General Secretary, or the FAM Executive Committee. In support of this, the FAM filed a witness statement by its Secretary General, who affirmed *inter alia* as follows:

*"I acknowledge that members of the FAM administration engaged in handling and formatting certain copies of birth certificates and related supporting documents in the course of building complete eligibility files. This included the altered content of the birth certificates received from the Players' agents. These steps, while administratively motivated, were not a substitute for obtaining certified copies or official extracts, nor were they authorized as an official verification process."*

100. The FAM argues that Article 22(2) FDC, which permits an association to be held liable for acts of forgery or falsification by its officials or players, is discretionary in nature. It does not impose automatic liability. FAM contends that the conduct in question was isolated, unauthorized, and not indicative of institutional policy or systemic misconduct. There was no organizational scheme to fabricate lineage or circumvent eligibility rules.
101. FAM further emphasizes its proactive engagement with FIFA and domestic authorities, including voluntary submission of eligibility inquiries, requests for verification of civil-status records, and cooperation with the investigation. These actions, it argues, militate against a finding of institutional deceit or reckless disregard.

**c) Absence of substantive sporting effect**

102. FAM asserts that the documentary irregularities had no material impact on the Players' eligibility to represent Malaysia. The Players were lawfully naturalized by the competent Malaysian authorities, who issued Certificates of Citizenship, identity cards, and passports. These sovereign acts are presumed valid under Swiss law and CAS jurisprudence, including CAS 2016/A/4831, which affirms the presumption of validity of official documents unless proven otherwise.
103. FIFA's eligibility confirmations, issued in response to FAM's inquiries, were informational in nature and did not constitute binding determinations. They expressly stated that the Players "would be eligible to play" based on the documentation submitted at the time. Any match-related consequences fall within the jurisdiction of the AFC, which will assess eligibility based on the underlying facts and applicable regulatory criteria, not on interim documentation.
104. FAM argues that the temporary submission of altered birth certificates did not result in any substantive sporting advantage or circumvention of eligibility rules. The Players' eligibility was ultimately confirmed by sovereign authorities, and the integrity of the competition was not compromised.

**d) Mitigating circumstances and proportionality of the sanctions**

105. In the event that liability is nonetheless attributed to the FAM under Article 22(2) FDC, it invokes Article 25 FDC, which mandates that disciplinary measures be determined in accordance with the objective and subjective elements of the offense, taking into account aggravating and mitigating circumstances.
106. FAM identifies multiple mitigating factors: its clean disciplinary record, the absence of knowledge or involvement by senior officials, its cooperation with FIFA and domestic authorities, the lawful naturalization of the players, and the implementation of governance reforms to prevent future lapses. It also notes that the sanctions imposed—particularly the CHF 350,000 fine—are manifestly excessive and unsupported by individualized reasoning.
107. In support of its position, FAM references prior FIFA and CAS decisions where sanctions for forgery-related offenses were significantly lower and calibrated to the entity's actual degree of fault. These include FDD-14433, FDD-11844, CAS 2024/A/11090, CAS 2002/A/9175, and CAS 2021/A/8344. FAM submits that a fine not exceeding CHF 50,000 would be proportionate and consistent with established disciplinary practice.
108. In addition, FAM confirmed during the hearing that it had initiated an investigation led by a former Malaysian Chief Justice to identify shortcomings in the processes concerning the Players. Mr. Rob Friend noted that he had recommended engaging Deloitte Sports to conduct the review, as this would enhance credibility; however, the FAM Board of Directors opted for a different approach. At the same time, FAM's legal counsel reiterated the suspension of the FAM Secretary General, Mr. Datuk Noor Azman Rahman, in response to an inquiry from the Chairperson of the Committee. When questioned about press reports alleging that Mr. Rahman was seen and photographed in public with senior FIFA officials during their attendance at a conference in Malaysia the day before the hearing, FAM's counsel stated that he was unaware of any such public appearance.

#### **4. Request for relief**

109. The FAM requested the following relief:

Primarily:

1. The Appealed Decision is null and void, with all sanctions imposed on the Football Association of Malaysia lifted.

In the alternative:

2. The Appealed Decision is overturned and the case referred back to the FIFA Disciplinary Committee, with all sanctions imposed on the Football Association of Malaysia lifted.

In the further alternative:

3. The Appealed Decision is overturned with all sanctions imposed on the Football Association of Malaysia lifted.

In the further alternative:

4. The Appealed Decision is overturned with the sanction on the Football Association of Malaysia be limited to CHF 50,000.

In any event:

5. All other or further motions or requests for relief are dismissed.

### **III. CONSIDERATIONS OF THE APPEAL COMMITTEE**

110. In view of the circumstances of the present matter, Committee decided to address the procedural aspects of the present matter, namely, the jurisdiction and the applicable law, before entering into the substance of the matter.

#### **A. Jurisdiction of the FIFA Appeal Committee and applicable law**

111. Firstly, the Committee noted that at no point during the present proceedings did the Appellants challenge the jurisdiction of the FIFA Appeal Committee, or the applicability of the FDC.

112. Secondly, the Committee recalled that the procedural aspects of the matter at stake were governed by the 2025 FDC, in particular considering that (i) the September 2025 FDC entered into force on 1 September 2025 and (ii) the present appeal was lodged by the Appellant in October 2025.

113. In light of the above, the Committee considered that, in accordance with art. 60 in conjunction with art. 61 of the FDC, it was competent to hear the appeal lodged by the Appellants against the Appealed Decision.

114. The Committee also confirmed that since the requirements under art. 60 FDC are met, the appeals are admissible.

## **B. Standard of proof and burden of proof**

115. Firstly, the Committee recalled that the burden of proof of the disciplinary offense lies with FIFA, which is required to prove the infringement under art. 41.1 FDC.
116. Next, the Committee pointed out that, in accordance with art. 39.3 FDC, the standard of proof to be applied in FIFA disciplinary proceedings is that of "*comfortable satisfaction*". According to this standard, the onus is on the competent judicial body to establish the disciplinary violation to its comfortable satisfaction, while taking into account the seriousness of the allegation(s). In this respect, the Committee recalled that the CAS – which also applies this standard in disciplinary proceedings – has defined it as a higher standard than the civil one of "*balance of probability*" but lower than the criminal "*proof beyond a reasonable doubt*"<sup>11</sup>.
117. Along these lines, the Committee underlined that per art. 40.2 FDC, any party claiming a right on the basis of an alleged fact shall carry the burden of proof of this fact. During the proceedings, the party shall submit all relevant facts and evidence of which the party is aware at that time, or of which the party should have been aware by exercising due care.
118. Having clarified the foregoing, the Committee subsequently proceeded to consider the merits of the case at hand.

## **C. Preliminary procedural issues**

### **1. Jurisdiction of the single judge to render the Appealed Decision**

119. As a departure point, the Committee recalled that the Appellants argue that the single judge exceeded his authority under art. 57 FDC to render the Appealed Decision. Said provision reads as follows (emphasis added):

*"57. JURISDICTION OF THE SINGLE JUDGES OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE*

- 1. The chairperson can rule alone as a single judge and may delegate their functions to another member of the Disciplinary Committee. In particular, **the chairperson or their nominee acting as a single judge may take decisions with respect to any matters provided for in this Code, including but not limited to:***
- a. **urgent or protest cases;***
- b. whether disciplinary proceedings should be initiated, suspended or terminated;*
- c. suspending a person for up to five matches or for up to three months;*
- d. **pronouncing a fine of up to CHF 100,000;***
- e. extending a sanction;*
- f. settling disputes arising from objections to members of the Disciplinary Committee;*
- g. issuing, altering and annulling provisional measures;*

<sup>11</sup> See amongst others CAS 2009/A/1920 FK Pobeda, Aleksandar Zabrcanec, Nikolce Zdraveski v. UEFA, award of 15 April 2010; Arbitration CAS 2010/A/2172 O. v. Union des Associations Européennes de Football (UEFA), award of 18 January 2011; Arbitration CAS 2013/A/3323 Deportivo Petare FC v. Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), award of 21 March 2014; Arbitration CAS 2017/A/5006 Harold Mayne-Nicholls v. Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), award of 14 July 2017.

- h. cases involving matters under articles 21, 23.2, 23.3 or 23.4 of this Code;*  
*i. cases involving order and security at matches; and/or*  
*j. unplayed or abandoned matches.*

*2. The secretariat, under the guidance of the chairperson or the deputy chairperson, is responsible for assigning the relevant cases to single judges. The proceedings before a single judge shall be conducted in accordance with this Code. **A panel shall decide on matters involving discrimination, match-fixing or anti-doping rule violations where the sanction is not listed in paragraph 1.***

120. Considering the contents of the relevant provision, the Committee rejects the Appellants' argument that the Single Judge of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee lacked jurisdiction.
121. The Committee considered that the urgency of the matter—given the proximity of international fixtures and the potential impact on the integrity of competition concerned—justified expedited adjudication. The Committee recalled in this respect the following dates outlined in the FIFA International Match Calendar for the year 2025<sup>12</sup>:

Date	Window Type	Confederation	Max. matches per Team
17-25 March	International match window	Available for all confederations	2
2-10 June	International match window	Available for all confederations	2
14 June – 6 July	Concacaf Gold Cup	Concacaf	—
1-9 September	International match window	Available for all confederations	2
6-14 October	International match window	Available for all confederations	2
10-18 November	International match window	Available for all confederations	2

122. The Committee underlined in this respect that the Players had already taken part in the Malaysian national team matches in the March and June windows, which sparked the investigation leading to these proceedings. What is more, while the proceedings were ongoing, part of the Players played additional two friendlies in the September window, and the October window had fixtures of the AFC Cup qualifiers to be played by the representative team of Malaysia. This demanded an expedite adjudication.
123. As this was not sufficient, the FAM filed, and the Players endorsed, a petition requesting a decision by the FIFA Disciplinary Committee “as soon as practicable” in light of the “upcoming international matches of the Malaysian National Team”. On this basis, the Committee concludes that the Appellants themselves recognized the importance of a swift decision and admitted the matter was urgent. Their change of course of action can be deemed, so finds the Committee, as a violation of the principle of *estoppel*.

<sup>12</sup> Available at [International Match Calendars](#).

124. Consequently, the Committee finds that the Single Judge acted within the bounds of his authority, and the procedural challenge raised by the Appellants is without merit. In fact, and as a last point, the Committee noted that the Appellants did not raise any issues concerning adjudication by a single judge when informed of the composition of the Disciplinary Committee.
125. In any event, and even if that was not the case (*quod non*), the Committee recalled that any possible procedural flaw is remedied by the appeal proceedings based on art. 63.2 FDC.
126. The objection raised by the Appellants is therefore rejected.

## **2. Proper notification of the Players during the first instance proceedings**

127. In their submissions, the Players outlined several times that they did not have the proper opportunity to state their case. The Committee finds, however, that the Players' attempt to portray themselves as passive individuals misled by FAM is contradicted by the procedural record and their own conduct. It worth mentioning that this passiveness and lack of any due care is consistent since the day they were contacted and accepted to become Malaysian nationals until the end of these proceedings.
128. The Committee deems that the Players were not only aware of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee proceedings but actively endorsed FAM's submission in the first instance. This endorsement was formalized through a signed statement of support, which clearly demonstrates their awareness of nature and scope of the disciplinary process.
129. The Players claimed that they did not read the submissions of the FAM and were unaware of its contents but do not deny that they signed the endorsement. As described throughout this decision and further expanded below, the Players systematically admit to signing documents without reading them or ignoring their contents yet now they try to avoid the consequences of these actions, a conduct that the Committee cannot condone. The Committee wished to note in this respect that a party is legally bound by the contents of what it signs unless such signature is obtained illegally – which is not the case at hand. The principle has been referred to in several decisions of the CAS, to which the Committee adhered<sup>13</sup>.
130. In this respect, the Committee recalled the legal principle *nemo auditur propriam turpitudinem allegans*, according to which no one can be heard to invoke their own turpitude. This means that no one can rely on their own wrongful, immoral, or illegal (which includes negligent) conduct to claim a legal benefit or defense. In essence, according to the cited principle, if a person creates a situation through unlawful actions, they cannot invoke the law to protect themselves or gain an advantage from that misconduct. The application of the principle ensures that justice does not reward bad faith or unethical behavior.

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<sup>13</sup> See for instance Arbitration CAS 2012/A/2818 Rudolf Urban v. FC Györi ETO kft., award of 14 September 2012 at para. 46 and Arbitration CAS 2022/A/9219 Jubilo Co. LTD v Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), award of 14 June 2023 (operative part of 22 December 2022) at para. 84. The Committee is conscious that most of the references in CAS jurisprudence referred to contract law, yet it was satisfied that the same principle applied *mutatis mutandis* to the matter at hand.

131. All in all, the Committee deemed that the Players' current claim of ignorance is not only inconsistent with the record but reflects a strategic shift in defense rather than a genuine lack of involvement. The Players had every opportunity to mount a proper defense during the initial proceedings and chose instead to rely on FAM's submission. The responsibility for that decision lies with them. Their attempt to shift blame now onto the FAM undermines their credibility and suggests a calculated effort to evade accountability.
132. The Committee concludes therefore that the proceedings in the first instance and the Appealed Decision were rendered following the requirements of the FDC and the objections raised by the Players are dismissed.

#### **D. Merits**

133. Before entering to the analysis on whether the Appellants breached article 22 FDC, the Committee believes it is relevant to address first the following two points:
- the birthplace of the Players' grandparents.
  - what are player eligibility criteria under the FIFA regulations, particularly the RGAS.
134. The Committee deemed this analysis necessary as it is umbilically connected to the issue of forgery and it serves as a fundamental explanation of why the forged documents were procured as well as why and how they were later used by the Appellants.

##### **1. Where were the Players' grandparents born?**

135. As a departure point, the Committee recalled that all the Players have submitted in these proceedings that they had sent to their agents or friends authentic birth certificates of their respective grandparents. On this note, 6 out of the 7 Players (i.e. all but Player 1) have submitted in these proceedings copies of the WhatsApp messages and such certificates, all of which show the grandparents' birthplace as *not* in Malaysia.
136. Therefore, the Panel is comfortably satisfied that the grandparents of Players 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 were not born in Malaysia as examined individually for each player in the subsections to follow.
137. At this junction, the Committee outlined that surprisingly 6 out of the 7 Players stated at the hearing that their respective grandparents were born in Malaysia. The only exception is Player 2, who stated he did not know where his grandparents were born.
138. The Committee noted that this was contradicted by (i) the Players' own declarations in their appeal briefs where they stated that they had submitted authentic documentation to their respective agents (or "friends"), consisting of the legitimate, original birth certificates of themselves, their parents and their grandparents, and (ii) the fact that none of those birth certificates listed the birthplace as Malaysia<sup>14</sup>. The Committee finds that this contradiction undermines the Players' accounts and credibility.

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<sup>14</sup> It is recalled that Player 1 did not submit these documents as they were apparently handed over in person.

139. In addition, the Committee recalled that the FAM submitted at the hearing that the Malaysian government has issued birth certificates that would allegedly demonstrate the birthplace of the Players' grandparents.

140. On this note, the Committee wished to underline that the relevant statement of the Director General of the National Registration Department (JPN) confirms that the original birth certificates of the Players' grandparents were never received by the Malaysian authorities; instead, these authorities issued their own copies based on secondary information:

*"2. In the present case, the applicants provided to us all the required documents together with the names and identification details of their grandparents. In accordance with our internal procedures, NRD conducted a cross-examination and verification of this information. As part of this verification, the Government also received documentation relating to all seven applications issued in Argentina, Brazil, and Spain. These documents were reviewed and used as part of our internal cross-verification process to confirm the applicants' lineage through their grandparents. This comparative assessment of foreign and domestic records was a standard measure undertaken to ensure accuracy and integrity in determining eligibility.*

***3. Through this process, NRD was unable to retrieve the original handwritten birth record from the historical archives. Accordingly, in line with the current administrative practice, NRD issued an official copy based on the evidence adduced that a birth had occurred.***" (Emphasis added).

141. In other words, the case file shows that the original birth certificates presented by the Players to their agents/friends were never forwarded to the Malaysian government. This, in the Committee's view, undermines the claim that the government's validation process was thorough or conclusive and further calls into question the birth certificates of the Players' grandparents issued at a later stage, as admitted by the FAM.

142. Considering the submissions filed by the Appellants in these proceedings and at the same time their contradicting evidence given at the hearing, the Committee is therefore compelled to evaluate the issue of the Players' ancestry. On this note, the Committee wished to underline that while it has its own view and more than one concern about the process that led to the naturalization of the Players, it is not its place to question the authenticity of the Malaysian passports issued by the government of Malaysia to the Players. The Committee must, however, as part of its duty to review the sanction imposed on the Appellants per the Appealed Decision, examine the issue of the grandparents' nationality and the authenticity of these documents. This is because if it was determined that the Players' grandparents were born in Malaysia, there would be no forgery pursuant to art. 22 FDC.

143. The Committee then proceeded to examine the evidence at its disposal with respect to each Player's ancestry. For each of them, the Committee will analyze the following evidence (when available):

- (a) the birth certificate of the grandfather/grandmother submitted by the FAM in the eligibility enquiry.
- (b) the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA administration.
- (c) the birth certificate issued by the Malaysian government; and

(d) the birth certificate submitted by the Players in the present appeal proceedings.

144. With this in mind, the Committee stressed that the FAM **admitted** that the birth certificates submitted in the eligibility enquiries are not authentic. Accordingly, the Committee will take this into account in the following examination.

**a) Player 1**

145. With regards to Player 1, he was unable to produce a copy of the documents handed over to his agent at a meal with his father. This leaves the matter of the examination only of (a) the birth certificate of his grandmother, Ms. María Belen Concepción Martín, born on 16 May 1956, submitted by the FAM in the eligibility enquiry, (b) the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA administration and (c) the birth certificate issued by the Malaysian government.

146. On this note, the Committee deems Player 1's statement at the hearing of particular importance. He was the last player to be interviewed, and his first response to the question of where his grandmother was born was Spain but subsequently corrected himself and stated "Malaysia". His exact words were: "My grandfather was born in Venezuela and my grandmother in Spain... I mean Malaysia, sorry".

147. As to item (a), it lists the birthplace of Ms. Concepción as "ciudad de Malacca (Federación de Malaya)" which translates to "city of Malacca (Federation of Malaya)". The rest of the content of the certificate is virtually identical to the one outlined in item (b), except for this one reads the birthplace as "Calle de A. Rodrigues López 48 en esta ciudad", which translates to "Street A. Rodrigues Lopez 48 in this city". Both items (a) and (b) show this same address as that of the parents of Ms. Concepción, Mr. Enrique Concepción and Ms. Micaela Martín. The ages are also indicated (25 and 27 respectively), as well as their professions (baker and stay-at-home person, respectively), and their parents names (parental: Miguel Concepción Rodriguez and Rosario Ramón Mesa; maternal: Manuel Martín Hernandez and Grifina Hernandez Hernandez).

148. Another noteworthy difference between the two certificates is their seal of authenticity: item (a) is missing the alpha-numeric code that allows any person to verify the digital signature and authenticity of the document with the relevant Spanish authority, something which is present in item (b). Player 1 has not presented such authentication in any of his pleadings before the Committee, a duty that lied with him per article 41.2 FDC.

149. In turn, item (c), i.e. the birth certificate issue by the government of Malaysia, is considered unreliable by the Committee. The certificate contains only a handful of indicated details, while most fields remain blank or marked as "Information Not Available." The indicated details are the child's full name, Maria Belen Concepcion Martin, her date of birth, 17 May 1956, and her place of birth, Malacca in the Federation of Malaya<sup>15</sup>. It also specifies her sex as female, her citizenship as Malaysian, the name of the informant, Gabriel Palmero, and the date of registration, which matches the birth date. Although the form includes a field for time of birth, no time is recorded. Similarly, the child's race and religion are not indicated. All parental details—names, identity card numbers,

<sup>15</sup> It is recalled that the Federation of Malaya, which succeeded the Malayan Union and the British Malaya before that, was formed in 1948 and lasted until 1963 when the Federation of Malaysia was formed as an independent country.

ages, citizenship, resident status, race, and religion—are absent. The residential address is also missing, and the informant's identification details are not provided except for his name as indicated above. There is also no date of issuance of the certificate, only the date of birth registration.

150. In fact, the Committee underlined that even the Player's nickname as the informant is listed, which does not seem consistent and renders the document unreliable in the Committee's view. This, in combination with the lack of accurate information, Player 1's witness statement and the fact that item (a) is forged as stated by the FAM, leads the Committee to be beyond comfortably satisfied that Ms. Maria Belen Concepcion Martin was born in Santa Cruz de la Palma in Spain and not in Malaysia.

**b) Player 2**

151. With respect to Player 2, he facilitated a PDF copy of WhatsApp conversations in which he, among others, shared a copy of the birth certificate of his grandfather, Mr. Carlos Rogelio Garcés Fernández, with "his friend", Mr. Federico Raspanti – identified as a person in contact with the FAM. Said birth certificate outlines the birthplace of Mr. Carlos Rogelio Garcés in Villa María Selva, Santa Fé de la Cruz, Argentina, and not in Malaysia.

152. Accordingly, the matter now requires examination of the following documents: (a) the birth certificate of his grandfather, Mr. Carlos Rogelio Garcés Fernández, born on 29 May 1930, submitted by the FAM in the eligibility enquiry, (b) the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA administration, (c) the birth certificate issued by the Malaysian government, and (d) the birth certificate submitted by the Player 2 in the present appeal proceedings.

153. In this regard, the Committee considers Player 2's statement during the hearing to be of particular significance. He was the first player to be interviewed, and he stated that he does not know the birthplace of his grandparents.

154. As to item (a), it lists the birthplace of Mr. Garcés Fernández as "George Town Straits Settlements (British Malaya)" in English language, while the rest of the certificate is naturally in Spanish. The other contents of the certificate are virtually identical to the one outlined in item (b) and (d), except for the birthplace as "en su domicilio en Villa María Selva", which translates to "at his residence in Villa María Selva" and that on the left upper corner it reads the name "Fernandez Carlos Rogelio". The three items (a), (b), and (d) show this same address as that of the witnesses, Mr. Cipriano Garces and Mr. Pedro Barreto. The ages are also indicated (43 and 64 respectively), as well as their professions (guard and day laborer, respectively), and they only mentioned his paternal grandparents' names (José Fernández and Ana Gálvez).

155. Another noteworthy characteristic common to items (a) and (d) is that both are only the hard copies bearing the signature and stamp of the Argentinian authority. In contrast, item (b) allows any person to validate this document through scanning the QR code in the respective link provided, and it also contains a digital signature and an alpha-numeric code.

156. In turn, item (c), i.e. the birth certificate issue by the government of Malaysia, is considered unreliable by the Committee. The certificate contains only a handful of indicated details, while most fields remain blank or marked as "Information Not Available." The indicated details are the child's

full name, Carlos Rogelio Garces Fernandez, his date of birth, 29 May 1930, and his place of birth, Georgetown Straits Settlement British Malaya. It also specifies his sex as male, his citizenship as Malaysian, the name of the informant, Garces, and the date of registration, which matches the birth date. Although the form includes a field for time of birth, no time is recorded. Similarly, the child's race and religion are not indicated. All parental details—names, identity card numbers, ages, citizenship, resident status, race, and religion—are absent. The residential address is also missing, and the informant's identification details are not provided except for the name "Garces" as indicated above. There is also no date of issuance of the certificate, only the date of birth registration.

157. The Committee finds that item (b), i.e. the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA administration, must be considered authentic. The document records the birthplace of Mr. Carlos Rogelio Garcés Fernández as "at his residence in Villa María Selva," located in Santa Fé, Argentina. This contrasts sharply with item (a), which lists the birthplace as "George Town Straits Settlements (British Malaya)" in English. This anomaly alone suffices to dismiss its authenticity, since an Argentinian registrar would never issue an official certificate with the birthplace in English rather than Spanish. Had the individual been born in British Malaya, the correct designation would have been "George Town, Asentamientos del Estrecho (Malaya Británica)," not "George Town Straits Settlements."
158. Moreover, item (b) contains a QR code, a digital signature, and an alpha-numeric code that allows any person to validate the document through official channels and demonstrates proof of origin. This feature is absent in items (a) and (d), which are merely hard copies bearing a stamp and signature. The ability to verify authenticity electronically provides a strong presumption of reliability in favor of item (b).
159. In contrast, item (c), the Malaysian certificate, is manifestly unreliable. It contains minimal information, omits essential details such as parental names and residential address, and even lacks an issuance date. The informant's identification is incomplete (bearing only the name "Garces"), and the certificate fails to record any other meaningful information. These deficiencies, combined with the admission by the FAM that item (a) is forged, lead the Committee to conclude that the Malaysian certificate cannot be trusted.
160. The Committee was furthermore comfortable with its assessment considering that the FAM filed in the proceedings FPSD-19517 a copy of the birth certificate of Player 2's father, Mr. Gustavo Gabriel Garces. Said birth certificate issued by the registrar in Santa Fé, Argentina, states that Mr. Carlos Rogelio Garcés Fernández (Player 2's grandfather) was Argentinian, not Malaysian, as follows (translation provided by the FAM in those proceedings, emphasis added):

*Certificate number one thousand four hundred and thirty-two  
In Santa Fe, Department of La Capital, Province of Santa Fe, Argentina, on the  
Twenty-second day of December, nineteen hundred sixty-one at twelve thirty hours. Before me Alfredo  
Raúl Marcilla, 2<sup>nd</sup> Chief in charge of the Civil Registry, appeared Mr. Carlos Rogelio Garces, domiciled at  
Laroisse 265, of thirty-one years old, of married status, **of Argentine nationality**, employee. Resident of  
this city. Declaring: that in this city on the twenty-second day of the month of the date at nine o'clock and  
twenty hours a white child was born who is his son and from Mrs. Belkis Gledi Juliana (...)”*

161. This leads the Committee to be beyond comfortably satisfied that Mr. Carlos Rogelio Garcés Fernández was born in Villa María Selva, Santa Fé, Argentina and not in Malaysia.

**c) Player 3**

162. Regarding Player 3, he facilitated a PDF copy of WhatsApp conversations in which he, among others, shared a copy of the birth certificate of his grandfather, Mr. Omar Eli Holgado Gardon, with "his agent", Mr. Nicolas Puppo – identified as a person in contact with the FAM. Said certificate states that Mr. Omar Eli Holgado Gardon was born in Caseros and not in Malaysia.
163. Accordingly, the matter now requires examination of the following documents: (a) the birth certificate of his grandfather, Mr. Omar Eli Holgado Gardon, born on 27 July 1932, submitted by the FAM in the eligibility enquiry, (b) the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA administration, (c) the birth certificate issued by the Malaysian government, and (d) the birth certificate submitted by Player 3 in the present appeal proceedings.
164. In this regard, the Committee considers Player 3's statement during the hearing to be of particular significance. He curiously stated that his grandmother (whom Player 3 did not name), not his grandfather, Mr. Omar Eli Holgado Gardon, was born in Malaysia. Yet, in his written submissions, he outlines that he presented the authentic birth certificates to his agent, which indeed show that Mr. Holgado Gardon was born in Argentina as explained above.
165. As to item (a), it lists the birthplace of Mr. Omar Eli Holgado Gardon as "George Town Straits Settlements" in English language. The rest of the content of the certificate is identical to the one outlined in item (b) and (d), except for the birthplace as item (b) "En el partido de Caseros [...] domiciliado en [...] este Partido [...] en su domicilio, nació una criatura del sexo masculino", which translates to "In the district of Caseros [...] residing in [...] this district [...] at his home, a male child was born", and item (d) "Caseros".
166. In turn, item (c), i.e. the birth certificate issue by the government of Malaysia, is considered unreliable by the Committee. The certificate contains only a handful of indicated details, while most fields remain blank or marked as "Information Not Available." The indicated details are the child's full name, Omar Eli Holgado Gardon, his date of birth, 27 July 1932, and his place of birth, Georgetown Straits Settlement. It also specifies his sex as male, his citizenship as Malaysian, the name of the informant, Holgado, and the date of registration, which matches the birth date. Although the form includes a field for time of birth, no time is recorded. Similarly, the child's race and religion are not indicated. All parental details—names, identity card numbers, ages, citizenship, resident status, race, and religion—are absent. The residential address is also missing, and the informant's identification details are not provided except for his/her name as indicated above. There is also no date of issuance of the certificate, only the date of birth registration.
167. The Committee deems that item (b), i.e. the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA administration, must be considered authentic. The document records the birthplace of Mr. Omar Eli Holgado Gardon as Caseros, Buenos Aires, Argentina. This stands in stark contrast to item (a), which lists the birthplace as "George Town Straits Settlements" in English. This anomaly alone suffices to dismiss its authenticity, since an Argentinian registrar would never issue an official certificate with the birthplace in English rather than Spanish. Had the individual been born in British Malaya, the

correct designation would have been "George Town, Asentamientos del Estrecho (Malaya Británica)," not "George Town Straits Settlements."

168. Moreover, item (b) contains no irregularities and is supported by verifiable technical features. Unlike items (a) and (d), which are merely hard copies bearing a stamp and signature, item (b) includes a digital signature, an alpha-numeric code, and a QR code that allow any person to validate the document through official channels. This capability provides a strong presumption of reliability in favor of item (b). Notably, both items (a) and (d) are dated 24 June 1974 while item (b) is from 16 July 2025.
169. In contrast, item (c), the Malaysian certificate, is manifestly unreliable. It contains minimal information, omits essential details such as parental names and residential address, and even lacks an issuance date. The informant's identification is incomplete, and the certificate fails to record the time of birth, race, or religion. These deficiencies, combined with the admission that item (a) is forged, lead the Committee to conclude that the Malaysian certificate cannot be trusted.
170. Finally, Player 3's own statements during the hearing further undermined the Malaysian claim. He curiously stated that his grandmother—not his grandfather—was born in Malaysia, which contradicts his written submissions asserting that the authentic birth certificates were presented to his agent and show that Mr. Holgado Gardon was born in Argentina. Taken together, these factors lead the Committee to be beyond comfortably satisfied that Mr. Omar Eli Holgado Gardon was born in Caseros, Buenos Aires, Argentina and not in Malaysia.

#### **d) Player 4**

171. With reference to Player 4, he facilitated a PDF copy of WhatsApp conversations in which he, among others, shared a copy of the birth certificate of his grandmother, Ms. Concepción Agueda Alaniz, with "his friend", Mr. Federico Raspanti – identified as a person in contact with the FAM. Said certificate shows that Ms. Concepción Agueda Alaniz was born in Roldán, Argentina and not in Malaysia.
172. Accordingly, the matter now requires examination of the following documents: (a) the birth certificate of his grandmother, Ms. Concepción Agueda Alaniz, born on 16 August 1954, submitted by the FAM in the eligibility enquiry, (b) the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA administration, (c) the birth certificate issued by the Malaysian government, and (d) the birth certificate submitted by the Player 4 in the present appeal proceedings.
173. On this regard, the Committee considers Player 4's statement during the hearing to be of particular significance. He stated that his grandmother was born in Malaysia, contrasting the content of the birth certificate provided by him in these proceedings.
174. As to item (a), it lists the birthplace of Ms. Concepción Agueda Alaniz *verbatim* as "george town Penang, federacion do malaya", which translates to "Federation of Malaya". The rest of the content of the certificate is identical to the one outlined in item (b) and (d), except for the birthplace as "Roldan". The three items (a), (b), and (d) show this same address "Roldan" as that of the parents of Ms. Concepción Agueda Alaniz, Mr. Celestino Alaniz and Ms. Nelida Agustina Ordoñez. The ages are also indicated (22 both), as well as the profession of Mr. Celestino (day laborer), and they

mentioned her grandparents' names (paternal: Pedro Alaniz and Concepción Vega, maternal: Agueda Ordoñez).

175. Another noteworthy difference between the aforementioned items is their seal of authenticity: item (a) is missing the QR code that allows any person to verify the digital signature and authenticity of the document with the relevant Argentinian authority, something which is present in items (b) and (d).
176. In turn, item (c), i.e. the birth certificate issued by the government of Malaysia, is considered unreliable by the Committee. The certificate contains only a handful of indicated details, while most fields remain blank or marked as "Information Not Available." The indicated details are the child's full name, Concepcion Agueda Alaniz, her date of birth, 16 August 1954, and her place of birth, Georgetown. It also specifies her sex as female, her citizenship as Malaysian, the name of the informant, Machuca, and the date of registration, which matches the birth date. Although the form includes a field for time of birth, no time is recorded. Similarly, the child's race and religion are not indicated. All parental details—names, identity card numbers, ages, citizenship, resident status, race, and religion—are absent. The residential address is also missing, and the informant's identification details are not provided except for his/her name as indicated above. There is also no date of issuance of the certificate, only the date of birth registration.
177. The Committee deems that item (b), i.e. the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA administration, must be considered authentic. The document records the birthplace of Ms. Concepción Agueda Alaniz as Roldán, Santa Fé, Argentina. This stands in stark contrast to item (a), which lists the birthplace *verbatim* as "george town Penang, federacion do malaya."
178. This wording is highly irregular for several reasons: first, it omits the tilde in "Federación," which is a clear orthographic error; second, it uses "do" instead of "de," which is not proper Spanish grammar; third, it fails to capitalize "George Town" and "Federacion," and even "Malaya" appears in lowercase, despite being a proper noun. These anomalies are particularly striking because the rest of the document employs capital letters correctly, which suggests that the errors are not accidental but rather indicative of a fabricated entry. The Committee is persuaded that an Argentinian registrar would never issue an official certificate with these linguistic and formatting mistakes. Had the individual been born in British Malaya, the correct designation would have been "George Town, Penang, Federación de Malaya," not "george town Penang, federacion do malaya."
179. Moreover, item (b) contains no irregularities and is supported by verifiable technical features. Unlike item (a), which lacks a QR code and digital signature, item (b) includes both, along with an alpha-numeric code that allows any person to validate the document through official channels. This capability provides a strong presumption of reliability in favor of item (b).
180. In contrast, item (c), the Malaysian certificate, is manifestly unreliable. It contains minimal information, omits essential details such as parental names and residential address, and even lacks an issuance date. The informant's identification is incomplete, and the certificate fails to record the time of birth, race, or religion. These deficiencies, combined with the admission by the FAM that item (a) is forged, lead the Committee to conclude that the Malaysian certificate cannot be trusted.

181. Finally, Player 4's own statement during the hearing further undermines his Malaysian ancestry claim. He asserted that his grandmother was born in Malaysia, which contradicts the content of the birth certificate he submitted in these proceedings. Taken together, these factors lead the Committee to be beyond comfortably satisfied that Ms. Concepción Agueda Alaniz was born in Roldan, Santa Fé, Argentina and not in Malaysia.

**e) Player 5**

182. With reference to Player 5, he facilitated a PDF copy of WhatsApp conversations in which he, among others, shared a copy of the birth certificate of his grandmother, Ms. Nair de Oliveira, with his agents Mr. Frederico Moraes and Mr. Flavio Alexandre, identified as the persons in contact with the FAM. Said certificate shows that Ms. Nair de Oliveira was born in Abre Campo, Brazil and not in Malaysia.
183. Accordingly, the matter now requires examination of the following documents: (a) the birth certificate of his grandmother, Ms. Nair de Oliveira, born on 26 September 1931, submitted by the FAM in the eligibility enquiry, (b) the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA administration, (c) the birth certificate issued by the Malaysian government, and (d) the birth certificate submitted by the Player 5 in the present appeal proceedings.
184. On this regard, the Committee considers Player 5's statement during the hearing to be of particular significance. He stated that his grandmother was born in Malaysia, contrasting the content of the birth certificate provided by himself in these proceedings.
185. As to item (a), it lists the birthplace of Ms. Nair de Oliveira as "Johore – British Malaya" in English language, while the rest of the document is in Portuguese. This alone suffices to dismiss the authenticity of the document, for the Brazilian Registrar would not issue an official document with the birthplace in English as opposed to Portuguese (i.e. had Ms. De Oliveira been born in the British Malaya, the document would read "Jor, Malaia Britânica" or "Joor, Malaia Britânica").
186. The rest of the content of the certificate is identical to the one outlined in item (b) and (d), except for the birthplace as the city of Abre Campo, in the State of Minas Gerais, Brazil. The three items (a), (b), and (d) show the date of birth registration as 12 October 1931. The parents of Ms. De Oliveira are also mentioned (Leonor Maria de Oliveira and Germano de Oliveira, as well as her grandparents' names (paternal: Manoel Pedro do Carmo and Maria Rita de Jesus, maternal: José Mateus and Elvira Maria de Oliveira). The time of birth, 13h00, is also listed in the three documents.
187. Another noteworthy difference between the aforementioned items is the certification number, since items (a) and (d) are hard copies of the certificate issued by the registry office in Abre Campo, Brazil, while item (d) is the electronic version obtained by the FIFA administration with the verifiable seal and authenticator via QR Code. In addition, items (a) and (d) are from 2017, while item (b) is from 12 June 2025.
188. In turn, item (c), i.e. the birth certificate issue by the government of Malaysia, is considered unreliable by the Committee. The certificate contains only a handful of indicated details, while most fields remain blank or marked as "Information Not Available." The indicated details are the child's

full name, Nair de Oliveira, her date of birth, 26 September 1931, and her place of birth, "Johor British Malaya". It also specifies her citizenship as Malaysian, the name of the informant, Joao Figueiredo, and the date of registration, which matches the birth date.

189. Most importantly, it oddly specifies her sex "male", which is also sufficient reason in the Committee's view to dismiss the validity of the information contained therein. While the form also includes a field for time of birth, no time is recorded. Similarly, the child's race and religion are not indicated. All parental details—names, identity card numbers, ages, citizenship, resident status, race, and religion—are absent. The residential address is also missing, and the informant's identification details are not provided except for "Joao Figueiredo" name as indicated above. There is also no date of issuance of the certificate, only the date of birth registration.
190. The Committee rules that item (b), i.e. the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA administration, must be considered authentic. It contains no irregularities or inconsistencies. Its content aligns with the details found in items (a) and (d) regarding the date of birth registration (12 October 1931), the parents' names (Leonor Maria de Oliveira and Germano de Oliveira), the grandparents' names, and the time of birth (13h00). However, unlike items (a) and (d), item (b) is an electronic version issued by the registry office and includes a verifiable seal and authenticator, which allows confirmation of its authenticity through official channels. This feature is absent in the hard copies provided by Player 5 and the FAM, significantly undermining their reliability in addition to the inconsistencies already mentioned.
191. In contrast, item (c), the Malaysian certificate, is manifestly unreliable. It contains minimal information, omits essential details such as parental data and residential address, and even incorrectly specifies the sex of the child as "male." The absence of an issuance date and the lack of identification details for the informant further render the document unreliable. This, combined with the admission by the FAM that item (a) is forged, leads the Committee to be beyond comfortably satisfied that Ms. Nair de Oliveira was born in Abre Campo, Minas Gerais, Brazil and not in Malaysia.
192. Finally, the Committee wished to recall that Player 5 confirmed during the hearing that his grandmother is alive, resides in São Paulo, Brazil, and that he meets her approximately once a year. Despite this, she was not called to testify and thus there is no corroboration to Player 5's statement that she was born in Malaysia, falling short of meeting the necessary burden of proof under art. 41.2 FDC. This reinforces the credibility of the Brazilian birth record obtained by the FIFA administration and further undermines the Malaysian certificate, which contains glaring inaccuracies.

**f) Player 6**

193. With respect to Player 6, he facilitated a PDF copy of WhatsApp conversations in which he, among others, shared a copy of the birth certificate of his grandfather, Mr. Gregorio Irazabal y Lamiquiz, with his agent, Mr. Ronald Vega – identified as a person in contact with the FAM. Said certificate shows that Mr. Gregorio Irazabal y Lamiquiz was born in Villa de Guernica y Luno and not in Malaysia. Accordingly, the matter now requires examination of the following documents: (a) the birth certificate of his grandfather, Mr. Gregorio Irazabal y Lamiquiz, born on 24 February 1928, submitted by the FAM in the eligibility enquiry, (b) the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA

administration, (c) the birth certificate issued by the Malaysian government, and (d) the birth certificate submitted by the Player 6 in the present appeal proceedings.

194. As to item (a), the Committee notes that its wording is quite unusual. It reads as follows (quoted *verbatim* and freely translated to English):

*En la Villa de Guernica y Luno, Provincia de Vizcaya, a las once horas del día veinticinco de marzo de mil novecientos veintiocho, and D. Joaquim [ilegible] Juez municipal y D. Romualdo Alonso, Secretario, se procede a inscribir el nacimiento de un (1) varón ocurrido Luching a las siete horas del día veinticinco de febrero en la Luching d Reino de Sarawak. Es hijo legítimo de D. Aniceto Irazábal y Lamiquiz de treinta y tres años, panadero, y de Leona Lamiquiz y Zugadi de 32 años, ocupación labores, naturales ambos de Múgica y vecinos de esta villa; nieto por línea paterna de Anselmo y de Josefa naturales y vecinos ambos de [ilegible] Múgica; y por línea materna de Gregorio natural de [ilegible], difunto, y de Josefa natural de [ilegible] vecina de Múgica.*

*In the town of Guernica y Luno, Province of Vizcaya, at eleven o'clock on the twenty-fifth day of March, nineteen hundred and twenty-eight, Mr. Joaquim [illegible] Municipal Judge, and Mr. Romualdo Alonso, Secretary, proceed to register the birth of one (1) male child born in Luching at seven o'clock on the twenty-fifth day of February in the Luching Kingdom of Sarawak. He is the legitimate son of Mr. Aniceto Irazábal y Lamiquiz, aged thirty-three, baker, and Leona Lamiquiz y Zugadi, aged 32, occupation: farm worker, both natives of Múgica and residents of this town; grandson on his father's side of Anselmo and Josefa, both natives and residents of [illegible] Múgica; and on his mother's side, of Gregorio, a native of [illegible], deceased, and Josefa, a native of [illegible], resident of Múgica.*

195. For its part, items (b) and (d) state as follows (quoted *verbatim* and freely translated to English):

*En la Villa de Guernica y Luno, Provincia de Vizcaya, a las once horas del día veinticinco de febrero de mil novecientos veintiocho, and D. Joaquim [ilegible] Juez municipal y D. Romualdo Alonso, Secretario, se procede a inscribir el nacimiento de un (1) varón ocurrido en ella a las siete horas del día de ayer en la calle de Fernando el Católico núm. Ocho piso primero. Es hijo legítimo de D. Aniceto Irazábal y Lamiquiz de treinta y tres años, panadero, y de Leona Lamiquiz y Zugadi de 32 años, ocupación labores, naturales ambos de Múgica y vecinos de esta villa; nieto por línea paterna de Anselmo y de Josefa naturales y vecinos ambos de [ilegible] Múgica; y por línea materna de Gregorio natural de [ilegible], difunto, y de Josefa natural de [ilegible] vecina de Múgica.*

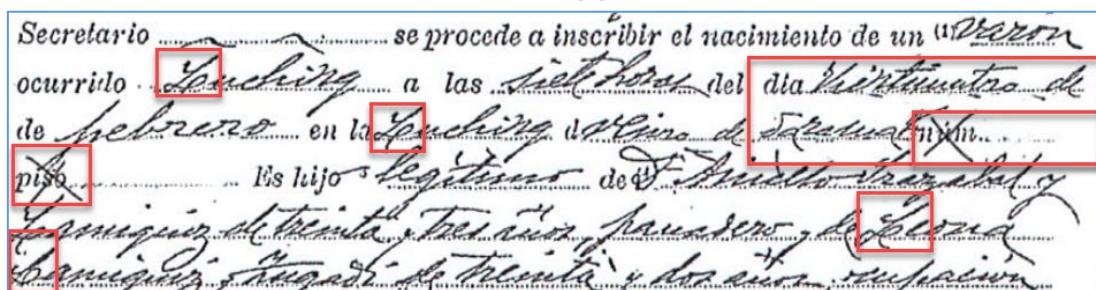
*In the town of Guernica y Luno, Province of Vizcaya, at eleven o'clock on the twenty-fifth day of February, nineteen hundred and twenty-eight, Mr. Joaquim [illegible] Municipal Judge, and Mr. Romualdo Alonso, Secretary, proceed to register the birth of one (1) male child, which occurred in this town at seven o'clock yesterday morning at Fernando el Católico Street, number eight, first floor. He is the legitimate son of Mr. Aniceto Irazábal y Lamiquiz, aged thirty-three, baker, and Leona Lamiquiz y Zugadi, aged 32, occupation: domestic worker, both natives of Múgica and residents of this town; grandson on his father's side of Anselmo and Josefa, both natives and residents of [illegible] Múgica; and on his mother's side, of Gregorio, a native of [illegible], deceased, and Josefa, a native of [illegible], resident of Múgica.*

196. The Committee underscored that item (a) states the word "Luching"; the document is manuscript and that word's first letter is clearly an "L", the same one used by the registrar to write "Lamiquiz"

or "Leona". It is surely not a "K" as it would be for "Kuching", the actual city that belonged to the Kingdom of Sarawak, now Malaysia. The Committee also noted the discrepancy between the documents as to the date: items (b) and (d) note that Mr. Gregorio Irazabal y Lamiquiz was registered on 25 February 1928 and in fact born the day before; while item (a) states that his registry was done on 25 March 1928 and his birthdate was 25 (not 24) February 1928.

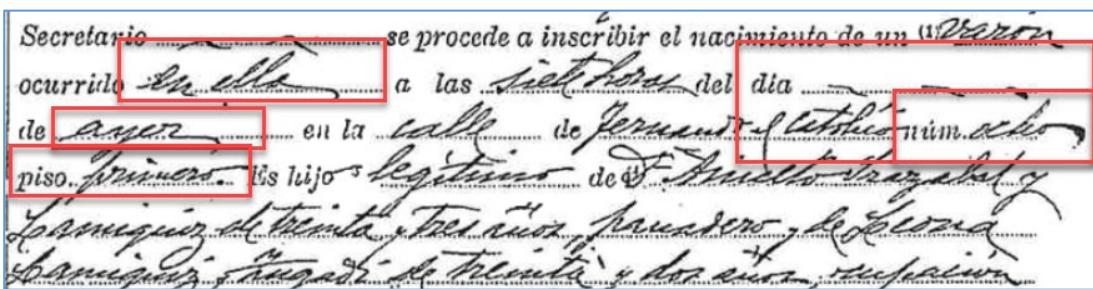
197. Another striking difference is the address: items (b) and (d) show the address of the registry as house number 8, first floor and item (a) has the number and the floor crossed out. On a closer examination, it appeared that these fields have been whitened or blurred in item (a), which is demonstrated by the previous line in which the word "veinticinco" was written in item (a) as opposed to item (b):

**Item (a)**



Secretario ..... se procede a inscribir el nacimiento de un <sup>varón</sup>  
ocurrido <sup>Kuching</sup> a las <sup>veinticinco</sup> del dia <sup>veinticinco</sup> de  
de febrero en la <sup>Kuching</sup> oficina de <sup>Salvación</sup>  
<sup>piso</sup> Es hijo legítimo de <sup>D. Amelio Irazabal y</sup>  
<sup>Lamiquiz de treinta y tres años, paradero, de Leona</sup>  
<sup>Lamiquiz, hija de treinta y dos años, esposa</sup>

**Items (b) and (d)**



Secretario ..... se procede a inscribir el nacimiento de un <sup>varón</sup>  
ocurrido <sup>en ella</sup> a las <sup>veinticinco</sup> del dia .....  
de <sup>ayer</sup> en la <sup>calle de Fernández de los Ríos</sup> num. <sup>veinticinco</sup>  
<sup>piso, primera</sup> Es hijo legítimo de <sup>D. Amelio Irazabal y</sup>  
<sup>Lamiquiz de treinta y tres años, paradero, de Leona</sup>  
<sup>Lamiquiz, hija de treinta y dos años, esposa</sup>

198. By the same token, a noteworthy difference between the items (a), (b) and (d) is their seal of authenticity: items (a) and (d) are missing the alpha-numeric code that allows any person to verify the digital signature and authenticity of the document with the relevant Spanish authority, something which is present in item (b). Player 6 has not presented such authentication in any of his pleadings before the Committee, a duty that lied with him per article 41.2 FDC.

199. In turn, item (c), i.e. the birth certificate issue by the government of Malaysia, is considered unreliable by Committee. The certificate contains only a handful of indicated details, while most fields remain blank or marked as "Information Not Available." The indicated details are the child's full name, Gregorio Irazabal y Lamiquiz, his date of birth, 24 February 1928, and his place of birth, Kuching Kingdom of Sarawak. It also specifies his sex as male, his citizenship as Malaysian, the name of the informant, Jon Irazabal, and the date of registration, which matches the birth date. Unlike the other birth certificates by the Malaysian government, this one indicates a date of extraction, namely 26 August 2025.

200. Although the form includes a field for time of birth, no time is recorded. Similarly, the child's race and religion are not indicated. All parental details except for the parents' names, Aniceto Irazabal y Lamiquiz and Leona Lamiquiz y Zugadi —identity card numbers, ages, citizenship, resident status, race, and religion—are absent. The residential address is also missing, and the informant's identification details are not provided except for the name "Jon Irazabal" as indicated above.
201. Considering the above, the Committee finds that item (b), the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA administration, must be deemed authentic. First, its content is internally coherent. The certificate records the birth in Villa de Guernica y Luno on 25 February 1928, with the birth occurring the previous day at a specific address—Fernando el Católico Street, number eight, first floor. This level of detail corresponds to standard Spanish registry practices of the time and contrasts sharply with item (a), which refers to an implausible location in the "Kingdom of Sarawak," and which is admittedly forged as confessed by the FAM, and even shows the wrong spelling of the relevant city ("Luching" instead of "Kuching").
202. Second, item (b) contains no signs of tampering or erasure. Unlike item (a), where certain fields appear blurred or whitened, item (b) presents a clear and unaltered record. The dates of birth and registration are logical and consistent, whereas item (a) introduces discrepancies by stating a registration date one month later than the birth date, which also seems incorrect. This coherence reinforces the reliability of item (b). Most importantly, item (b) includes the alpha-numeric code that enables verification of its digital signature with the Spanish civil registry. This feature is absent from items (a) and (d), which significantly undermines their credibility. The presence of this code in item (b) provides an objective mechanism to confirm its authenticity, satisfying both formal and substantive requirements.
203. Thus, the Committee is beyond comfortably satisfied that Mr. Gregorio Irazabal y Lamiquiz was born in Villa de Guernica y Luno and not in Malaysia.

**g) Player 7**

204. With respect to Player 7, he facilitated a PDF copy of WhatsApp conversations in which he, among others, shared a copy of the birth certificate of his grandfather, Mr. Hendrik Jan Hevel, with his agent, Mr. Ronald Vega – identified as a person in contact with the FAM. Said certificate states that Mr. Hendrik Jan Hevel was born in the Hague, the Netherlands.
205. Accordingly, the matter now requires examination of the following documents: (a) the birth certificate of his grandfather, Mr. Hendrik Jan Hevel, born on 3 February 1933, submitted by the FAM in the eligibility enquiry, (b) the birth certificate obtained by the FIFA administration, (c) the birth certificate issued by the Malaysian government, and (d) the birth certificate submitted by the Player 7 in the present appeal proceedings.
206. As to item (a), it lists the birthplace of Mr. Hendrik Jan Hevel as "Malacca Straits Settlements". The rest of the content of the certificate is identical to the one outlined in item (b) and (d), except for the birthplace as "Gravenhage", which translates to "The Hague". The three items (a), (b), and (d) show the name of the parents (Meerten Johan Hevel and Katharina Alosery) and the child's sex as male. In fact, the only difference between items (b) and (d) is their date of issuance, respectively 25 August 2025 and 6 January 2025. The latter is the same date as item (a).

207. In turn, item (c), i.e. the birth certificate issued by the government of Malaysia, is considered unreliable by the Committee. The certificate contains only a handful of indicated details, while most fields remain blank or marked as "Information Not Available." The indicated details are the child's full name, Hendrik Jan Hevel, his date of birth, 3 February 1933, and his place of birth, Malacca Straits Settlements. It also specifies his sex as male, his citizenship as Malaysian, the name of the informant, Hector Hevel, and the date of registration, which matches the birth date. Although the form includes a field for time of birth, no time is recorded. Similarly, the child's race and religion are not indicated. All parental details—names, identity card numbers, ages, citizenship, resident status, race, and religion—are absent. The residential address is also missing, and the informant's identification details are not provided except for the name "Hector Hevel" as indicated above. There is also no date of issuance of the certificate, only the date of birth registration.
208. Thus, the constellation listed above combined with the lack of accurate information, Player 7's witness statement with very little additional information, the similarities of items (b) and (d) and the admission by the FAM that item (a) is forged, leads the Committee to be comfortably satisfied that Mr. Hendrik Jan Hevel was born in the Hague, the Netherlands and not in Malaysia.

#### **h) Conclusion**

209. Considering the above findings of the Committee, it is comfortably satisfied that the birth certificates filed in the FIFA proceedings concerning the eligibility checks for the Players are not authentic.

### **2. General observation of player eligibility criteria under the FIFA regulations**

210. Having found that none of the Players' grandparents was born in Malaysia, the Committee deemed it necessary to recall certain fundamental aspects regarding player eligibility pursuant to the applicable FIFA regulations.
211. During the hearing, the counsel for Players 2, 3 and 4 outlined the distinction between the matter addressed by the Appealed Decision, namely the use of forged documentation under art. 22 FDC, and the eligibility of the Players to represent the Malaysian national team. He was echoed by the counsel for the FAM who further indicated that it will be for the AFC to rule on the issue of eligibility concerning the match Malaysia v. Vietnam in the context of the AFC Cup Qualifiers.
212. The Committee does not disagree in principle with said assertions. However, the eligibility requirements are a central element to the matter at hand, because the question of whether the Players were eligible to play for Malaysia is what triggered the procurement of the documentation in the first place, as admitted by the FAM at the hearing, and ultimately led to the doctored birth certificates being filed with FIFA.
213. In this respect, the 2024 edition of the RGAS states under its art. 6 (1) that any person holding a permanent nationality that is not dependent on residence in a certain country is eligible to play for the representative teams of the association of that country. In this regard, art. 6 (2) RGAS specifies that there is a distinction between holding a nationality and being eligible to obtain a nationality. A player holds a nationality if they have either: (a) automatically received said nationality without

being required to undertake any further administrative requirements (e.g., nationality by birth); or (b) acquired said nationality by undertaking a naturalization process (e.g., nationality by acquisition or naturalization). Further clarification on this distinction being contained in edition 2021 of the FIFA's Commentary on the Rules Governing Eligibility to Play for Representative Teams (the **Commentary**)<sup>16</sup>.

214. The principle contained in art. 6 (1) RGAS is however counterbalanced by:

- art. 6 (3) RGAS which provides that, "*[w]ith the exception of the conditions specified in art. 10 [RGAS], any player who has already participated in a match (either in full or in part) in an official competition of any category or any type of football for one association may not play an international match for a representative team of another association*";  
and
- art. 8 RGAS, which applies where a player has acquired a new nationality over the course of their career (i.e., nationality by acquisition or naturalization), in accordance with which "*[a]ny player who refers to article 6 paragraph 1 to assume a new nationality and who has not played international football in accordance with article 6 paragraph 3 shall be eligible to play for the representative teams of the new association only if they fulfils one of the (...) conditions*" listed under art. 8 (1) RGAS, namely (i) "*[t]hey were born on the territory of the relevant association*", (ii) "*[t]heir biological mother or biological father was born on the territory of the relevant association*", (iii) "**[t]heir grandmother or grandfather was born on the territory of the relevant association**", and/or (iv) "*[t]hey have lived on the territory of the relevant association*" for a defined period of time depending on the age of arrival in the new country. (emphasis added).

215. Summarising the above *a contrario*, any player would be considered ineligible to play for the representative team of an association in circumstances where:

- they do not hold the "*permanent nationality [of the relevant country] that is not dependent on residence in [said] country*"; and/or
- they already participated in a match in an official competition for the representative team of another association and has not been granted a change of association under art. 10 RGAS; and/or
- they acquired the nationality of that association's country by undertaking a naturalization process but does not fulfil one of the conditions listed under art. 8 (1) RGAS.

216. It stems from the above that under FIFA's eligibility rules, holding nationality alone is insufficient where nationality was acquired through naturalization or acquisition. In such cases, the player must also meet one of the conditions in Article 8 RGAS: being born in the territory, having a parent or grandparent born there, or having resided there for a defined period. Additionally, players who

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<sup>16</sup> Available at [ro8mje8vw98yp3rvfbmi-pdf.pdf](https://ro8mje8vw98yp3rvfbmi-pdf.pdf)

have already played for another association cannot switch without an approved change under Article 10 RGAS.

217. In the case at hand, the Committee established that none of the Players' grandparents were born in Malaysia. This finding is decisive because all seven Players acquired the Malaysian nationality by undertaking a naturalization process and thus relied on the ancestral link under Article 8(1)(iii) RGAS—the requirement that a biological grandmother or grandfather was born on the territory of the relevant association—to justify eligibility for Malaysia. Since this condition is not met, the players cannot rely on Article 8 RGAS to represent Malaysia.

218. This is precisely where the fraudulent use of documentation comes into play: the Players are not, and would not, be eligible to play for Malaysia in natural conditions. At the time the eligibility requirements were filed, it was with the doctored birth certificates that eluded FIFA's evaluation.

219. Therefore, even if the Players had acquired Malaysian nationality by adequately undertaking a naturalisation process—whether predicated on residence (the application forms they signed included a declaration of "no less than 10 years" residence, which was later acknowledged as not being the case), or on any other domestic ground not established on the record—they would still be ineligible to play for the representative team of Malaysia because they presently do not satisfy any of the conditions required by Article 8 RGAS.

### **3. Did the Appellants breach art. 22 FDC?**

220. Now that the Committee is comfortably satisfied that the birth certificates filed in the FIFA proceedings concerning the eligibility checks for the Players are not authentic, it will analyze whether the Appellants breached art. 22 FDC and then their degree of contribution.

221. In the specific context of the matter at hand, art. 22 FDC, related to "Forgery and falsification", reads as follows:

1. *Anyone who, in football-related activities, forges a document, falsifies an authentic document or uses a forged or falsified document will be sanctioned with a fine and a ban of at least six matches or for a specific period of no less than 12 months.*
2. *An association or a club may be held liable for an act of forgery or falsification by one of its officials and/or players.*

222. More specifically, this article aims at sanctioning the perpetrator(s) of forged or falsified documents, or user(s) of such documents, but also to make the association (or club) to which the perpetrator(s) belong(s) responsible for this behaviour, in accordance with art. 22 (2) FDC. In other words, the association (or club) concerned is therefore liable for the offence committed by one of its members, even if the association (or club) is not directly at fault. The FIFA Judicial Bodies are thus entitled to sanction not only the author or user of the forged or falsified document, but also the club or association to which the latter belongs, in order to ensure the implementation of FIFA's statutory objectives (cf. art 2 (g) of the FIFA Statutes).

223. At the same time, the Committee recalls the contents of art. 8(1) FDC:

*Unless otherwise specified in this Code, infringements are punishable regardless of whether they have been committed deliberately or negligently (...).*

224. In examining the provisions in question under the 2019 edition of the Code, and which to date retain the same wording, the Panel in CAS 9175 & 9176<sup>17</sup> explained as follows (para. 196 *et seq.*):

- Since the term “falsified document” is not defined in Article 21 FDC<sup>18</sup> or elsewhere in FIFA regulations, the Panel, following Article 56(2) of the FIFA Statutes and Article 5 FDC<sup>19</sup>, applied Swiss law to interpret the term. Under Swiss law, Article 251 of the Swiss Criminal Code addresses forgery and falsification of documents. It criminalizes producing a false document, falsifying a genuine document, or using a false or falsified document to deceive, with penalties of up to five years’ imprisonment or a monetary fine.
- Swiss jurisprudence interprets “false document” and “falsified document” broadly to include both material forgery (*faux matériel*), where the real author differs from the apparent author, and intellectual forgery (*faux intellectuel*), where a genuine document contains false information. The Swiss Federal Tribunal has confirmed that Article 251 CP covers both scenarios. Thus, the interpretation of “falsified document” under FIFA rules encompasses authentic documents with false content, not only physically altered documents.
- Unlike fraud, the forgery provisions of the FDC do not require *mens rea*, unlawful gain, or damage. Article 8 FDC explicitly states that infringements are punishable regardless of whether they are committed deliberately or negligently, unless otherwise specified. Therefore, the Panel concluded that Article 21 FDC 2019 imposes strict liability: the use of a falsified document constitutes a violation regardless of intent or resulting harm.

225. Along the same lines, the Panel in CAS 9637<sup>20</sup>, while examining a breach of the forgery and falsification provision of the FIFA Code of Ethics<sup>21</sup> established the following:

- Article 24 para. 1 is interpreted broadly: it covers three distinct acts—(i) forging a document, (ii) falsifying an authentic document, and (iii) using a forged or falsified document. Importantly, the offender does not need to be the person who forged or falsified the document; merely using such a document, even negligently, constitutes a breach.
- Article 6 para. 2 of the FCE clarifies that breaches can occur through acts or omissions, whether deliberate or negligent. Since Article 24 does not specify otherwise, the Panel concludes that negligence suffices for liability. This means that even without intent to

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<sup>17</sup> TAS 2022/ A/9175 Federación Peruana de Futbol c. Federación Ecuatoriana de Futbol & FIFA - TAS 2022/A/9176 Federación de Futbol de Chile c. Federación Ecuatoriana de Futbol, Byron Castillo Segura & FIFA.

<sup>18</sup> Now art. 22 FDC.

<sup>19</sup> Same provision in the 2025 edition of the FDC.

<sup>20</sup> Arbitration CAS 2023/A/9637 Abu Nayeem Shohag v. Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), award of 13 November 2024

<sup>21</sup> Art. 24 FCE: “Persons bound by this Code are forbidden from forging a document, falsifying an authentic document or using a forged or falsified- document”.

deceive, a party who fails to exercise due diligence when using a forged or falsified document violates the Code.

226. A similar conclusion was reached by the Panel in the matter CAS 10586<sup>22</sup> in examining the forgery and falsification provisions of the FIFA Code of Ethics, as well as their equivalent version of art. 8(1) FDC, namely art. 6(1) FCE. The Panel concluded that under Article 6(2) of the FCE, breaches can be deliberate or negligent, and attempted acts are sanctionable. The Panel clarified that negligence alone consists of the minimum standard for a violation of the forgery/falsification provisions.
227. In that matter, the appellant effectively admitted negligence by stating his role was minor and his signature merely formal, suggesting he signed documents without proper inspection. The Panel concluded that this lack of diligence—especially given his awareness of prior investigations—constituted a breach of Article 25 (forgery and falsification), as well as Articles 14 (general duties) and 16 (duty of loyalty) of the FIFA Code of Ethics. In short, the appellant's failure to exercise due care when approving procurement processes was the core of the violation<sup>23</sup>.
228. The Appellants go at great length in these proceedings to argue that there are no objective and subjective elements to the infringement. However, the Committee, adhering to the CAS case law in question, underlines that the provision prohibits both the direct and indirect use of forged or falsified documents in football-related activities, as well as the fact that the negligent use of documentation is also punishable. The language is intentionally broad to ensure that all forms of document misuse are captured, including situations where individuals benefit from documents submitted by third parties. There is no question that playing for the representative team of a member association of FIFA is a football-related activity.
229. It is abundantly clear to the Committee that the Players required the forged documentation to obtain eligibility to play for Malaysia. Without the falsified birth certificates, they would not have met the criteria under FIFA's eligibility rules, nor the AFC's requirements to be registered to play in that confederation's competitions. The Players participation in the matches against Nepal and Vietnam were made possible only using these documents. The same goes for the other three friendly matches played.
230. What is more, the Appellants' reliance on Article 8(1) FDC is a misreading. That provision explicitly states that both deliberate and negligent conduct are sanctionable. The rule does not require proof of intent, which is also a requirement which is not present under art. 22 FDC, which aligns the offense with the mere use. The Committee is satisfied that this interpretation is supported by the aforementioned CAS case law.
231. Irrespective of the above and for the sake of completeness, the Committee wished to highlight that the Players' failure to exercise basic scrutiny over the documents submitted on their behalf constitutes (gross) negligence. The intention behind the use of the documents is also evident: to gain eligibility and play for the Malaysian national team. This objective was achieved, and the Players directly benefited from the forged documentation.

<sup>22</sup> CAS 2024/A/10586 Abu Nayeem Shohag v. Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), award of 30 October 2025.

<sup>23</sup> See para. 316-326 of CAS 2024/A/10586 Abu Nayeem Shohag v. Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), award of 13 November 2024.

232. This principle was reaffirmed in CAS 7259<sup>24</sup>, where the Panel held that Article 15 FDC (current Art. 21 FDC – *Failure to respect decisions*) does not distinguish between forms of fault—intent or negligence—in determining whether a violation occurred. The Appellant’s disregard of clear CAS decisions and active pursuit of a player’s registration, despite procedural errors by a third party, was sufficient to establish liability. This aligns with Article 8 FDC, which explicitly states that infringements are punishable regardless of whether they have been committed deliberately or negligently. The FDC thus imposes liability based on the objective conduct of the parties, not their subjective intent, reinforcing the principle that disciplinary accountability under the FDC is grounded in both deliberate and negligent behaviour.
233. On this note, the Committee observed that the Appellants rely on the case CAS 5769<sup>25</sup> in support of their position. Said case however is different from the one at hand because it does not concern the use of a forged document, but forging or falsifying the document *per se*.
234. Notwithstanding this distinction, and assuming *arguendo* that this Committee were to adopt the reasoning in said award regarding the necessity of an intent requirement, the Panel in CAS 5769 clarified that the **minimum** threshold for establishing a violation under Article 17 FCE<sup>26</sup> is the presence of indirect intent (*dolus eventualis*). This standard requires that the individual must have foreseen the possibility that their conduct *could* constitute a breach and nonetheless accepted that risk.
235. In support of this interpretation, the Panel referenced established CAS jurisprudence in the context of anti-doping violations, where *dolus eventualis* has been held sufficient to establish intent. The analogy employed by the Panel was that of an individual entering a “minefield” with the primary objective of safe passage yet knowingly accepting the inherent risk of harm—thereby demonstrating indirect intent.
236. Applying this reasoning to the present matter and the Appellants’ specific reliance in the award in question, the act of submitting documentation to FIFA for the purpose of obtaining eligibility confirmation reflects a proactive effort by the Appellants to mitigate regulatory uncertainty in light of the requirements imposed by the AFC Regulations, but also to obtain a broader guarantee, particularly on the FAM’s side but not exclusively, that the Players’ recruitment via the “heritage scheme” was successful. In accordance with FIFA regulations and the Commentary, member associations are not required to obtain a formal decision from the FIFA Football Tribunal in circumstances of this nature. Yet, the Players, while knowing they did not possess Malaysian ancestry, made use of the forged documentation to be able to obtain the clearance from FIFA. This is made worse considering the FAM’s admission that the grandparent’s birth certificates were doctored by FAM staff, and that the Players never checked, read, examined or otherwise showed any interest or diligence towards their documentation. Even after being sanctioned by the FIFA Disciplinary Committee, none of the Players asked any questions to their agents or friends or the FAM or their families to understand what happened to their naturalization and/or eligibility to play

<sup>24</sup> Arbitration CAS 2020/A/7259 Aris Football Club v. Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), award of 1 September 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Arbitration CAS 2018/A/5769 Worawi Makudi v. Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), award of 11 February 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Similar provision to the contents of art. 24 in CAS 2023/A/9637 Abu Nayeem Shohag v. Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), award of 13 November 2024.

for the FAM. The Committee finds that one would expect that after being prevented from playing football (i.e., exercising their profession), the Players, with their expected reasonable duty of care, would assess the reasoning on why there were sanctioned.

237. Consequently, in addition to the serious negligence of the Appellants, even considering the case law invoked by the Appellants, their conduct would also meet the threshold of *dolus eventualis*, which justifies the imposition of sanctions, as established in CAS 5769.
238. In the present case, the FAM submitted birth certificates to FIFA which were not authentic and bore material discrepancies. Given the nature of the documents, the context in which they were obtained and submitted—namely, to secure eligibility confirmation for Players—, the complete absence of any connection between the Players and the country of Malaysia, the Appellants must have foreseen the risk that the documents were forged or falsified and proceeded nonetheless. This evidences a deliberate disregard for the integrity of the process constitutes a sufficient element for a finding of forgery. The submission of such documents, with the intent to influence FIFA's regulatory determination, amounts to a clear breach of art. 22 FDC by the Appellants.
239. Having so found, the Committee then progressed to analyse the Appellants' degree of contribution to the offense.

#### **4. The Players' flawed victim narrative and their gross negligence**

240. The Appellants argue that FAM was responsible for the naturalization and eligibility processes and that they merely followed instructions. However, this argument fails to recognize a fundamental legal and factual truth: the beneficiary of a naturalization process is the individual being naturalized.
241. Furthermore, the Committee finds that the Appellants' argument that the Players merely followed instructions is not supported by the evidence on file. While the FAM may have overseen procedural aspects, the beneficiaries of the process were the Players themselves. They accepted to play for the FAM, to start the naturalization process, procured and submitted personal and ancestral documents, signed application forms, appeared before the Malaysian authorities, and accepted Malaysian passports. The Committee is convinced that these actions obliged them, to the very least, to verify the legitimacy of the documents and the processes. Given this duty, the Players could not simply sign documents without reading them or forward certificates without making any effort to verify their accuracy or origin. Such conduct falls well below the standard expected of a reasonable professional in their position and is incompatible with the level of responsibility inherent in seeking national-team representation.
242. On this note, the Committee is not prepared to follow the narrative that the Players were passive victims of an orchestrated scheme. A reasonable professional player would have questioned how they could represent a country with which they had no genuine connection. The Committee stresses: the Players' affiliation with Malaysia is non-existent. The Committee finds that the idea they could play for Malaysia without asking a single question defies logic and professional responsibility.

243. The Committee is persuaded that the forged documents were the sole basis for their eligibility. Without these measures, they would not have been permitted to play. Their failure to address this incongruity confirms both willful blindness and gross negligence. Trusting unknown intermediaries without verifying the process or the documents cannot absolve them of responsibility. In fact, the Committee recalled that Player 2 even admitted at the hearing his attitude toward reading documents was "No me compete," (i.e. "it is not up to me") which underscores a complete disregard for personal responsibility, which the Committee deems applied across the board to all the Players.
244. The Committee has observed that during the hearing, the Players confirmed that they had not read the documents they signed, had not checked the documents sent to their agents or FAM, had not asked questions about the naturalization process, and had not sought clarification—even after disciplinary proceedings were opened and sanctions were imposed. They expressed surprise at the Appealed Decision but still failed to enquire what had happened to the FAM or their agents: only Player 5 explained that he asked his lawyer what went wrong. The Committee finds it inexplicable that none of the Players dared to question the persons concerned (i.e. the agents/friends) what had happened to the documentation, who forged them, and why they ended up suspended. This lack of curiosity and accountability unacceptable, and a clear indication that the Players might knew of the obscure scheme that would be concluded with their accrual of Malaysian citizenship.
245. The Committee also notes that while the Players have stated they have no affiliation with Malaysia, they have yet to provide a satisfactory explanation for their perceived eligibility to play for its national team. Their only explanation was blind trust in individuals with whom they had little familiarity. In one instance, Player 6 was even approached by an agent who was not his representative at the time, offering the chance to play for Malaysia. The Committee finds that such actions demonstrate an absolute disregard for the integrity of the process and an orchestrated effort.
246. At this junction, the Committee wished to underscore that it has been unable to identify a reasonable explanation for the events that transpired between the Players' submission of documents and their appearance for Malaysia. This is simply because neither the Players nor the FAM has taken any of the steps to provide this explanation. Months later, the identity of the forger remains unknown.
247. Yet the Players insisted at the hearing that their grandparents were Malaysian.
248. In continuation, the Committee moved to the assertion that the Players did not require falsified documents because they already had successful careers and concluded this is equally implausible. If playing for Malaysia was of little consequence, why did the Players pursue the opportunity, submit documents, sign forms, and participate in official matches? The Committee finds that their actions demonstrate a clear appreciation for the opportunity and a strategic intent to leverage it for their benefit.
249. The Committee recognizes that the Players are seasoned professionals with international careers. They are not minor parties unfamiliar with contractual obligations. Their conduct—signing without reading, failing to verify, and blatantly ignoring their responsibility for processes that affected their careers to a significant degree—falls far below the standard of care expected in international football and amount to a situation of recklessness beyond repair.

250. The Committee is comfortably satisfied that the Players acted negligently to a severe extent. Their actions demonstrate a pattern of deliberate carelessness and misplaced confidence, which cannot and do not exonerate them from their responsibilities. It can be concluded therefore that the Players negligently used and benefitted from the forged documents with *faux intellectual* and therefore must be sanctioned accordingly.

#### **5. Conduct of the FAM and its officials – admission of guilt and lack of credibility**

251. Moving to the submissions of the FAM, the Committee categorically rejects the FAM's attempt to minimize the seriousness of its conduct by characterizing the deliberate alteration of official civil-status documents as mere "administrative adjustments". In fact, the admission by the FAM Secretary General—acknowledging that members of the FAM administration "*engaged in handling and formatting certain copies of birth certificates... including the altered content*"—constitutes a direct confession of document tampering. The Committee deems that his further statement that these steps "*were not a substitute for obtaining certified copies or official extracts, nor were they authorized as an official verification process*" confirms that the association knowingly submitted falsified documents to FIFA in the context of eligibility proceedings.
252. Moreover, the Committee reasons that the gravity of this misconduct is amplified by the fact that forgery is a criminal offense in virtually all jurisdictions. This broadly reflects a universal legal consensus: the integrity of official documents is sacrosanct, and their falsification is a punishable offense.
253. In continuation, the Committee wished to express both its surprise and disappointment with the FAM's failure to identify the individuals responsible for the tampering, their rank, or their specific roles within the association is deeply troubling. The FAM has not taken any discernible disciplinary action—no concrete suspensions, no dismissals, no referrals to domestic authorities. This omission suggests a lack of accountability and raises serious concerns about the governance culture within the organization. The continued shielding of confessed culpable staff members, coupled with vague assertions of administrative error, appears to be a tactical *manoeuvre* designed to deflect institutional responsibility while preserving internal cohesion.
254. On this note, the Committee is unimpressed by the suspension imposed on the FAM's Secretary General, Mr. Noor Azman Rahman. While the FAM announced the suspension on 17 October 2025 and referenced it in its submissions, the Committee finds that the conditions and scope of this suspension have not been clearly articulated or enforced. Public reports and credible sources indicate that the suspended official continued to appear at high-profile events, including those attended by FIFA leadership, which undermines the credibility of the measure and suggests it was primarily a public relations exercise rather than a genuine governance action.
255. Moreover, the Committee notes again with concern that, despite several months having elapsed since the initiation of the matter, the FAM has failed to identify the individuals responsible for the forgery of documents despite the FAM's admission of tampering with them. The Committee's view is that this inability to establish accountability raises serious questions about FAM's internal controls and true commitment to integrity.

## 6. Undue sporting gain

256. Having found that the Appellants breached article 22 FDC deliberately (the FAM) and negligently (the Players) by using falsified documents and before moving the proportionality of the sanctions, the Committee wishes to point out the undue sporting gain resulting for such a breach.
257. In its submissions, the FAM argued that there was very little sporting gain in the fraud committed in respect of the Players. As it will be explained in continuation, the Committee does not share the FAM's position in this respect.
258. Contrary to FAM's claim, the Players actively participated in five international matches representing Malaysia, thereby deriving direct and tangible sporting benefit from the fraudulent eligibility:
- a. On 25 March 2025, Player 7 featured in the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027™ Qualifiers Third Round Group F match between Malaysia and Nepal, which Malaysia won 2-0, and he scored at the 29th minute, materially contributing to the outcome.
  - b. On 29 May 2025, Player 1 took part in a Tier-1 friendly against Cape Verde, which ended in a 1-1 draw.
  - c. On 10 June 2025, all seven Players featured in the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027™ Qualifiers Third Round Group F match between Malaysia and Vietnam, which concluded with a decisive 4-0 victory for Malaysia. Notably, Player 5 (João Vítor Brandão Figueiredo) and Player 3 (Rodrigo Julián Holgado) scored goals in the 49th and 59th minutes, respectively, materially contributing to the outcome.
  - d. On 4 September 2025, Players 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 participated in a Tier-1 friendly match against Singapore, which Malaysia won 2-1. Player 5 again scored, this time in the 55th minute, materially contributing to the outcome.
  - e. On 8 September 2025, Players 1, 3, and 5 featured in another Tier-1 friendly against Palestine, securing a 1-0 victory, with Player 5 scoring in the 3rd minute, materially contributing to the outcome.
259. It is to be noted that today, Malaysia sits atop their group standings at the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027™ Qualifiers, while serious questions as to the integrity of that competition remain in light of the current proceedings.
260. These appearances and goal contributions demonstrate that the Players were not merely passive beneficiaries of the eligibility process; they were active participants whose presence on the pitch had a direct impact on match outcomes. The Committee notes in this respect that the international friendlies have an impact in the FIFA/Coca-Cola World Rankings.
261. Along these lines, the Committee deems that as correctly stated in the Appealed Decision, FAM's reliance on FIFA's eligibility confirmations is equally misplaced. The correspondence issued by FIFA in response to FAM's inquiries did not constitute binding determinations of eligibility. Rather, the letters stated that the Players "appeared to be eligible" based on the documentation submitted at

the time. Crucially, the documentation provided by FAM included the doctored birth certificates. It follows that the eligibility confirmations were issued on the basis of fraudulent information. Had FIFA been in possession of the original, unaltered documents, it is evident that a different conclusion would have been reached. The Committee therefore finds that the eligibility confirmations were vitiated by the falsified documentation and cannot be relied upon to exculpate either the Players or the FAM.

262. The Committee reiterates that the integrity of international football depends on the authenticity of documentation and the legitimacy of player eligibility. Any breach of these principles—particularly one that results in competitive advantage—must be addressed decisively to preserve the credibility of the sport of football and the fairness of its competitions.

## **7. Proportionality of the sanctions**

263. Both the FAM and the Players addressed the issues of the proportionality of the sanctions in their submissions. Accordingly, the Committee reviewed these allegations in light of the facts and evidence at its disposal as well as the relevant case law.

264. In doing so, the Committee is adamantly convinced that had the FIFA Disciplinary Committee been able to examine all the materials now available in these appeal proceedings, the sanctions imposed on all the Appellants would be significantly higher. In fact, the Committee wished to express that if not for the limitation imposed by the *non reformatio in pejus* principle imposed by art. 63.4 FDC, it would be prepared to issue harsher sanctions than the ones imposed in the first instance.

265. This is because the Committee deems that these appeal proceedings had shed light in fundamental aspects of the Appellants' behaviour, namely:

- The gross negligence of the Players, which includes signing documents without reading and failing to verify their own ancestry records on multiple accounts, combined with their complete lack of interest in understanding the process or verifying with their agents what happened after they forwarded their documents. Even after being sanctioned, they did not seek clarification from FAM, or their intermediaries, or their families. This posture, in the Committee's view, amounts to strong indications that they were aware of the irregular nature of the scheme.
- By the same token, the Players' posture throughout the proceedings, continuing to assert that their grandparents were born in Malaysia despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, and their inability to provide any reasonable explanation for why they believed they could represent Malaysia despite having no connection to that country in the first place.
- FAM's own admissions and its poor attempt to downplay the seriousness of the actions, coupled with remedial measures that appear superficial and largely for public relations purposes. The Committee is unimpressed by the so-called suspension of the FAM General Secretary, which lacks clarity, enforcement, and credibility—particularly as reports indicate the official continued to appear at high-profile events.

- The complete failure of FAM, after many months, to identify the individuals responsible for forging the documents that enabled the Players' eligibility. This inability to establish accountability reflects systemic governance deficiencies and a lack of genuine commitment.

266. Taken together, these elements demonstrate in the Committee's view that the conduct under review is more serious than initially assessed. The Committee is comfortably satisfied that the actions of both the Players and FAM undermine the integrity of the game of football and warrant severe condemnation.

267. Since the sanctions cannot be increased, however, the Committee proceeded to review them and to explain why it deems they must be maintained.

**a) Relevant case law**

268. As a departure point, the Committee wished to observe the following precedents from both the FIFA Judicial Bodies and CAS, all of which underscore the seriousness of forgery and document falsification within football. These cases indicate that federations, officials, and players bear responsibility for ensuring the authenticity of documents used in competitions and governance.

269. In CAS 9175 & 9176, the proceedings examined allegations that the Ecuadorian Football Federation (FEF) fielded Byron Castillo using falsified birth documents during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ preliminary competition. CAS confirmed the FEF was responsible for document irregularities. Although the FEF retained its place in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™, the Panel imposed a three-point deduction in the next qualification cycle and a fine of CHF 100,000. The award emphasized that federations have a strict duty to verify the authenticity of eligibility documents and that the use of falsified documents—even without direct involvement in the forgery—constitutes a serious breach.

270. Similarly, in CAS 9637, the former General Secretary of the Bangladesh Football Federation was sanctioned for using falsified procurement documents in transactions involving FIFA Forward funds. CAS confirmed a two-year ban and a CHF 10,000 fine, holding that Article 25 of the FIFA Code of Ethics penalizes both the act of falsification and the use of falsified documents. The Panel clarified that intent is not limited to direct forgery; *dolus eventualis* or even gross negligence suffices for liability.

271. Most recently, CAS 10586 revisited similar issues involving the same official but in a separate set of transactions. The case concerned four procurement processes for goods and services intended to be paid with FIFA Forward funds, where falsified quotations were used to justify compliance with procurement requirements. CAS confirmed FIFA's findings that the quotations were forged or falsified and that Shohag, as General Secretary of the Bangladesh Football Federation, bore responsibility for their use. The Panel emphasized that Article 25 of the FIFA Code of Ethics sanctions both forging and using falsified documents, even if the individual did not personally create them. It held that negligence suffices for liability. Despite mitigating factors—such as the transactions being halted before payment—the Panel upheld a three-year ban and a CHF 20,000 fine, reinforcing that repeated breaches and lack of diligence in financial oversight constitute serious ethical violations.

272. The principle that falsification constitutes a grave ethical violation was also reaffirmed in CAS 5769. This case addressed forgery in governance matters, and CAS upheld FIFA's decision, stressing that falsification of official documents undermines trust in football governance and warrants severe sanctions, regardless of whether financial harm occurred.
273. Although not related to forgery but the fielding ineligible players, the Committee stressed that in CAS 11091<sup>27</sup> the Equatorial Guinean Football Federation fielding an ineligible player in dozens of matches. CAS upheld FIFA's sanction of CHF 150,000, two-thirds of which was suspended. The decision reiterated that federations are strictly liable for compliance with eligibility rules and cannot shift responsibility to intermediaries, and that negligence in verifying documents amounts to a breach under FIFA's disciplinary framework. The Committee deemed this decision a good reference to the precedent of setting amounts of fines imposed on member associations.
274. In respect of decision issued by FIFA's decision-making bodies, the Committee noted that the disciplinary decisions mirror the principles outlined in CAS jurisprudence. In FDD-14433 (Guidars FC), the club was sanctioned for using forged player passports, resulting in a registration ban for two periods and a CHF 50,000 fine. Likewise, matter FDD-11840 (CF Soccer Inter-Action) involved falsified documentation for the international transfer of minors, leading to a one-period registration ban and a CHF 20,000 fine, underscoring FIFA's zero-tolerance approach to document falsification in player transfers. In FDD-8206 (Club Chabab Mrirt), the Moroccan club submitted forged settlement agreements during FIFA's execution procedure. Sanctions included a CHF 50,000 fine, a registration ban for two consecutive windows, and CHF 5,000 in forensic costs, with the decision confirmed on appeal by the FIFA Appeal Committee.
275. Individual players are also directly liable for document falsification, as illustrated by Case 150902 (Player Camila Nobre), where the player used falsified documents in Olympic qualifiers and received a ten-month ban, a CHF 2,000 fine, and a warning. Institutional misconduct attracts even more severe consequences, as seen in Case 150901 (Equatorial Guinean FA), where the federation also used falsified documents in proceedings related to the Olympic Games qualifiers. FIFA sanctioned the FEGUIFUT with a CHF 40,000 fine, exclusion of its women's team from the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Football Tournament, and a warning.

## **b) The Players**

276. Given the arguments raised by the Players, the Committee deems it necessary to divide them into three principal issues with respect to the proportionality of the sanctions imposed: (a) observation of mitigating and aggravating circumstances; (b) observation of the relevant case law; and (c) appropriateness of the sanction.

### **(1) Mitigating and aggravating circumstances**

277. The Players argue that the Appealed Decision failed to give proper weight to mitigating factors, particularly their clean disciplinary record and limited match participation.

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<sup>27</sup> Arbitration CAS 2024/A/11091 FEGUIFUT v. FIFA, award of 25 July 2025.

278. The Committee is however not prepared to follow the Players' argumentation as the Appealed Decision explicitly acknowledges the Players' clean record before FIFA's judicial bodies as a mitigating factor. This is stated in para. 62 of the Appealed Decision: *"Against this framework, the Committee acknowledged that the Respondents appeared to present a clean record before the FIFA Judicial Bodies, which serves as a mitigating circumstance."*
279. The Committee deems that this acknowledgment was not merely symbolic; it directly influenced the Disciplinary Committee's decision to impose the minimum sanction available under Article 22 FDC: a 12-month suspension. Had the Appealed Decision not considered this mitigating factor, it would have been justified in departing from the minimum and imposing a longer suspension. The Players' claim that the clean record was ignored is therefore factually and legally unfounded.
280. In addition, the Players' argument that their limited participation in matches should mitigate the sanction is both factually inaccurate and legally irrelevant. Factually, the Players participated in three matches, not one, including two matches while the disciplinary proceedings were ongoing. This continued participation demonstrates sustained benefit from the forged documentation and undermines any claim of minimal involvement.
281. In continuation, the Players mischaracterize the reasoning of the Appealed Decision regarding aggravating circumstances. The Appealed Decision, however, did not merely restate the seriousness of the offence; it provided a structured and fact-based rationale for imposing a time-based suspension, rather than a match-based one. On this note, the Committee highlighted the following passage: *"The Players ultimately achieved their objective: they obtained falsified documentation, used it in the aforementioned FIFA proceedings, and were subsequently fielded in an official match with a significant impact to the end result of the match. This sequence of actions significantly aggravates the seriousness of the case, as it demonstrates a deliberate and successful attempt to circumvent the rules for personal and sporting gain."*
282. The Committee therefore sees no reason to uphold the Players' position in this respect.

## **(2) Case Law**

283. The Committee deems that the Players selectively cited precedents that support their position while ignoring relevant decisions referenced in the Appealed Decision, while in fact this cherry-picking undermines the credibility of their legal argument. In particular, the Appealed Decision referenced Decisions FDD-150901 and FDD-150902, involving Camila Maria do Carmo Nobre de Oliveira and the Equatorial Guinean Football Association (FEGUIFUT). In that case, falsified documents were used with intent to deceive in FIFA judicial proceedings related to the preliminary competition for the Women's Olympic Football Tournament. The sanctions imposed were:
- Ms. De Oliveira: CHF 2,000 fine, 10-month ban from matches of the representative team, warning and reprimand.
  - FEGUIFUT: CHF 40,000 fine, exclusion from the Olympic Football Tournament Tokyo 2020<sup>TM</sup>, including the preliminary competition, warning and reprimand.
284. The Committee underlines that these precedents demonstrate that FIFA has consistently imposed time-based suspensions in cases involving forged documentation used to obtain national team

eligibility. The Players' failure to acknowledge these decisions reflects a selective and incomplete presentation of the relevant jurisprudence.

### **(3) Appropriateness of the sanction**

285. In their appeal, the Players suggest that any sanction should be limited to international duty, which means that the Players would be free to play for their clubs.

286. The Committee reasons nonetheless that if the Players are not eligible to play for Malaysia without the forged documents, then suspending them only from international duty effectively results in no sanction at all. It would allow them to continue their professional careers uninterrupted, despite having committed a serious breach of FIFA's eligibility rules while employing fraudulent documentation. The Committee finds that such an outcome would undermine the deterrent effect of the sanction and send a dangerous message to the football community—that fraudulent conduct can be pursued with zero consequences. FIFA's disciplinary framework is designed to protect the integrity of the sport, and sanctions must reflect the seriousness of the offence, not merely its context.

287. On this note, the Committee shared the view expressed in CAS 11090<sup>28</sup>:

*100. Moreover, Article 2 (g) of the FIFA Statutes emphasizes FIFA's commitment "to promote integrity, ethics and fair play". FIFA upholds these objectives by enforcing stringent requirements for any change of association. These eligibility criteria are vital for safeguarding the integrity and distinctive character of national team competitions. Therefore, a violation of the principles set forth by FIFA in its applicable regulations governing eligibility cannot be considered as a minor infringement.*

*101. In view of the fact that (a) the Player was ineligible to play for the FEGUIFUT in 2013, (b) he failed to verify this despite the duty of care and diligence that can be expected from someone of his professional background, and (c) he went on to represent the FEGUIFUT 42 times, including in two 2026 FIFA World Cup™ preliminary matches, the Panel considers that the sanction imposed upon him cannot be deemed "evidently and grossly disproportionate to the offence". This point is further reinforced by the fact that, while the exact start of the Player's suspension is not clearly established, it is nonetheless uncontested by the Parties that the sanction has already been served. **It is worth noting that the suspension solely restricted the Player "from playing for any representative team of any association", which he was in any case not eligible to do prior to the Players' Status Committee's decision of 5 March 2025. Therefore, it appears that the suspension was either shorter than six months in practical effect or may not have been effectively served at all.***

288. Additionally, the Committee noted the Players' argument regarding the ban on any football-related activity and the alleged impact on their careers, as well as the powers of the Committee under art. 25.4 FDC, according to which in exercising its discretionary powers, the relevant FIFA judicial body may scale down the disciplinary measure to be imposed or even dispense with it entirely.

289. On this note, the Committee recalled that the wording of art. 22 FDC states that the sanction to be imposed is both a ban and a fine<sup>29</sup>. This means that within the *lex specialis* of the provision, there

<sup>28</sup> Arbitration CAS 2024/A/11090 Emilio Nsue v. FIFA, award of 28 July 2025.

<sup>29</sup> "Anyone who, in football-related activities, (...) uses a forged or falsified document will be sanctioned with a fine and a ban of at least six matches or for a specific period of no less than 12 months".

are minimum criteria that the Committee must observe. In this vein, art. 6.2 FDC establishes that the following sanctions may be imposed on natural persons only:

- a) suspension for a specific number of matches or for a specific period;
- b) ban from dressing rooms and/or team bench;
- c) ban on taking part in any football-related activity;
- d) community football service;
- e) suspension or withdrawal of a football agent licence;
- f) suspension or withdrawal of a match agent licence.

290. It follows that there are only two “bans” available to be imposed on anyone who in football-related activities uses a forged or falsified document: either a ban from dressing rooms and/or team bench, or a ban on taking part in any football-related activity. It is evident that a ban from dressing rooms or team bench is not adequate or related to the case at hand, since this is not a match-related offense in the sense of misconduct of players or officials, which is governed by art. 14 FDC. In any event, for the reasons set out above, the Committee deems that the match suspension (which is in fact worse than the ban from the dressing room or team bench) is not adequate to the case at hand.
291. The logic conclusion is that by operation of art. 22 and art. 6.2 FDC, the Committee is *bound* to impose a ban on any football-related activity. The Committee recalls in this respect that this imposition of a harsh sanction is in line with the legal principle under protection at hand, as forgery is a severe offense and a crime in several jurisdictions as outlined before.

### **c) The FAM**

292. Turning to the FAM’s position, the Committee deems that the arguments regarding the alleged disproportionality of the sanctions are unfounded and unsupported by the record. It reiterates in this respect that the sanctions imposed in the Appealed Decision were even mild considering the gravity of the offense, the applicable legal framework, and jurisprudence of FIFA’s judicial bodies.
293. Firstly, the Committee deems the FAM’s invocation of mitigating circumstances is unpersuasive. The only relevant mitigating factor—the association’s previously clean disciplinary record—was duly acknowledged and factored into the Appealed Decision. Beyond this, FAM has failed to demonstrate any concrete remedial action. They have not identified the individuals responsible for the document tampering, has not imposed internal sanctions other than a deceptive suspension, and has not concretely initiated any structural reforms (or at least none which has been publicly announced). The absence of transparency, accountability, and corrective measures following a grave admission of misconduct is incompatible with the standards of governance expected of a FIFA member association.
294. Moreover, the Committee deems that the financial sanction of CHF 350,000 imposed on FAM is consistent with the range of fines authorized under Article 6(4) FDC, which permits the imposition of fines up to CHF 1,000,000. The fine imposed falls well within this statutory ceiling and is proportionate to the nature and scope of the misconduct. The Committee further notes that the

sanction aligns with precedent established in comparable cases adjudicated by FIFA's judicial bodies, as outlined in the Appealed Decision.

295. On this note, the Committee felt compelled to stress that the FAM submitted in both its written and oral pleadings that previous case law indicated a fine of CHF 50,000 as proportionate to offenses regarding forgery and falsification. The Committee shares the FAM's view in this respect but underlines at the same time that the FAM was involved in seven different eligibility checks for the seven Players and as correctly outlined in the Appealed Decision<sup>30</sup>, it was sanctioned in a situation akin to seven counts of forgery.
296. In this sense, the Committee observed that in similar matters involving document falsification and eligibility manipulation, fines of comparable magnitude have been imposed. Particularly, it underlined that in CAS 9175 & 9176 the sanction imposed on an association for the use of a forged document by one of its players was a fine of CHF 100,000 and a 3-point deduction.
297. The Committee therefore concluded that it saw no grounds to modify the fine imposed on the FAM per the Appealed Decision.

## **8. Conclusion and recommendations**

298. The Committee wishes to underscore that the offenses examined in these proceedings strike at the very foundation of football's integrity. As emphasized in the Committee's reasoning, the eligibility of players to represent national teams is not only a necessary procedural requirement but also a fundamental principle that safeguards the credibility of international competitions and the trust of stakeholders worldwide. Any attempt to forge documentation with the purpose of deceiving governing bodies and circumventing applicable regulations constitutes a grave breach of this principle. Such conduct undermines the fairness of the game, erodes public confidence, and cannot, under any circumstances, be tolerated.
299. In light of the foregoing, the Committee concludes that there are no grounds to overturn the Appealed Decision. Accordingly, the same is confirmed, and the Appellants' appeals are dismissed in their entirety. It follows that the costs of these proceedings shall be borne by the Appellants in equal shares, in accordance with Article 49 FDC.
300. Having reached these conclusions, the Committee considers it necessary to draw additional remarks. Based on the evidence presented and the outcome of these proceedings, the Committee finds compelling reasons to initiate further inquiries pursuant to Articles 30, 35, and 55(1)(f) and (2) FDC. These provisions empower the Committee to issue directives to ensure that all aspects of the misconduct, or its consequences, are fully investigated.

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<sup>30</sup> Para. 68 of the Appealed Decision: "*Taking into account the foregoing and after careful consideration of the entirety of the evidence at its disposal, as well as precedents of the FIFA Judicial Bodies, the Committee determined that the most appropriate and proportionate measures in view of the offence(s) committed were: [a] fine of CHF 350,000 to be imposed on the FAM, calculated on the basis of CHF 50,000 per player involved in the fraudulent use of documentation (...).*"

301. Consequently, the Committee instructs the Secretariat to take immediate steps to launch a formal investigation into the internal operations of the FAM. This investigation shall aim to identify the individuals responsible for the falsification of documents; assess the adequacy and effectiveness of FAM's internal compliance and governance mechanisms; and determine whether additional disciplinary measures are warranted against FAM officials.
302. As an initial focus, the investigation must examine the role of the FAM Secretary General and that of two licensed FIFA agents named in these proceedings: Mr. Nicolás Puppo and Mr. Frederico Moraes. Their involvement raises serious concerns that merit thorough scrutiny.
303. In parallel, the Committee instructs the Secretariat to initiate a separate investigation into the fielding of ineligible players in the context of the three friendly matches cited in these proceedings. This inquiry shall establish the circumstances under which some of the Players participated and whether further sanctions are appropriate.
304. Finally, given the nature and gravity of the offenses—particularly the forgery of official documents—the Committee directs the Secretariat to adopt the necessary steps to notify the competent criminal authorities in Brazil, Argentina, the Netherlands, Spain, and Malaysia. Forgery constitutes a criminal offense in these jurisdictions, and it is imperative that the relevant authorities are informed so that appropriate criminal investigations and proceedings may be pursued.

## IV. DECISION

1. The appeal filed by **Facundo Tomas Garces, Rodrigo Julian Holgado, and Imanol Javier Machuca** (ref. FDD-25550) is dismissed.
2. The appeal filed by **Gabriel Felipe Arrocha, Joao Vitor Brandao Figueiredo, Jon Irazabal Iraurgui, and Hector Alejandro Hevel Serrano** (ref. FDD-25566) is dismissed.
3. The appeal filed by the Football Association of Malaysia (ref. FDD-25574) is dismissed.
4. The decision of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee passed on 25 September 2025 in the matter ref. FDD-24394 is confirmed in its entirety.
5. The costs and expenses of the proceedings in the amount of CHF 8,000 are to be borne by each of the Appellants in equal shares. The amount is set off against the appeal fees already paid.

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE  
DE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

*W. M. Eggleston*  
Neil Eggleston (USA)  
Chairperson of the FIFA Appeal Committee

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**NOTE RELATING TO LEGAL ACTION:**

According to art. 50.1 of the FIFA Statutes read together with arts. 52 and 61 of the FDC, this decision may be appealed against before the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). The statement of appeal must be sent to the CAS directly within 21 days of receipt of notification of this decision. Within another 10 days following the expiry of the time limit for filing the statement of appeal, the appellant shall file a brief stating the facts and legal arguments giving rise to the appeal with the CAS.