



Urgent Appeal of the Human Rights House Tbilisi and its Member Organizations Regarding the chase and imprisonment of human rights defenders in Azerbaijan

Human Rights House Tbilisi and its member organizations are deeply concerned regarding the unprecedented crackdown against human rights defenders by the Azerbaijani government. Over the last two weeks, the Azerbaijani government arrested four human rights defenders, well-known and critical leaders of the civil society in the country. All were arrested with similar charges (tax evasion, illegal entrepreneurship and abuse of authority inter alia, in addition to treason charges).

Azerbaijan holds the Presidency of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers since May 2014. However, the Azerbaijani government continues to pressure against human rights defenders and fails to comply with its international obligations and blatantly violates the European Convention on Human Rights.

Human Rights House Tbilisi and its member organizations condemn the arrest of well-known human rights defenders – **Leyla Yunus** and her husband **Arif Yunus**, **Rasul Jafarov** and **Intigam Aliyev** and call for the Azerbaijani government to stop repression on representatives of civil society organizations; unconditionally and immediately release arbitrary detained human rights defenders; to put an end to harassment against human rights defenders in Azerbaijan, and ensure in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate activities without any hindrance or fear of reprisals or intimidation.

Human Rights House Tbilisi and its member organizations urge the Council of Europe and the members of the Committee of Ministers to take urgent measures towards the charring country, so that Azerbaijani government respect international treaties and agreements as well as the European Convention on Human Rights.

Human Rights House Tbilisi and its member organizations are concerned regarding the regarding detention and expected extradition of Dashgin Agararl, citizen of Azerbaijan, member of opposition political party, Musavat. We are calling for the Minister of IDPs, Accommodation and Refugees, Sozar Subari to assess the dangers threatening his life and security in Azerbaijan, to analyze severe state of human rights in Azerbaijan and to make decision and grant him with the political asylum and status of refugee.

For more information:

- **Rasul Jafarov** has been engaged in the defense of the rights of political prisoners since 2006 and an active participant in "Sing for Democracy" (in relation to Eurovision held in Baku in 2012) and "Art for Democracy", a campaign that employs all forms of artistic expression to promote democracy and human rights in Azerbaijan, founder of the Human Rights Club. He later joined the NGO Legal Protection and Awareness Society, of which he is the chairman. On August 2, Rasul Jafarov was summoned to the Investigation Department for Serious Crimes, under the Prosecutor General's Office, on criminal charges related to "tax evasion", "illegal entrepreneurship" and "abuse of authority" (under Articles 213, 192 and 308.2 of the Penal Code respectively). On the same day, Mr. Jafarov was brought to the Nasimi District Court, which decided to place him on pre-trial detention for three months pending investigation into the charges against him. On July 25, 2014, a travel ban had been issued against him after he presented a report on political prisoners in Azerbaijan to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in Strasbourg, in June 2014. In the morning of July 29, 2014, border guards of the Beyuk Kiasik checkpoint had not allowed him to leave the country.
- On July 30, 2014, the Prosecutor's office employees arrested **Ms. Leyla Yunus**, Director of the Institute of Peace and Democracy (IPD) and a member of OMCT General Assembly, who was charged with

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“treason” (Article 274 of the Criminal Code), “large-scale fraud” (Article (178.3.2), “forgery” (Article 320), “tax evasion” (Article 213), and “illegal business” (Article 192), and sentenced to three months pre-trial detention.

- Her husband, **Mr. Arif Yunusov**, Head of the Conflictology Department of IPD, faces similar charges of “treason” and “fraud”, and was initially barred from traveling, but not jailed for health reasons. However, on August 5, 2014, the court eventually decided to arrest him too, and to place him in pre-trial detention for three months.
- On August 8, 2014, prosecutors began to search the apartment of **Mr. Intigam Aliyev**, Head of the Legal Education Society, as well as the premises of the organisation. Before these searches, Mr. Aliyev had been summoned to the Investigation Department for Serious Crimes of the Prosecutor General's Office as a witness. On the same day, the Nasimi District Court sentenced Mr. Intigam Aliyev to three months' detention under Articles 213.1 of the Criminal Code (“evasion of taxes or contributions for compulsory social insurance in significant amount”), 308.2 (“abuse of power”), and 192.2 (“illegal business”).
- The charges against mention human rights defenders are similar to the accusations which were brought against **Mr. Anar Mammadli**, Chairperson of the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre (EMDSC), and **Mr. Bashir Suleymani**, Executive Director of EMDSC. Both were sentenced for “tax evasion”, “illegal entrepreneurship”, and “abuse of authority” respectively to 5,5 years' and 3,5 years' imprisonment on May 26, 2014 by the Court on Grave Crimes.
- Also on August 8, the office of the Institute of Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS) was blocked by the police and later searched, and documents and equipment were confiscated. On August 5, the border guards had not permitted the Director of IRFS, **Mr. Emin Huseynov**, to leave to Turkey for medical treatment. A court decision was issued against Emin Huseynov on 8 August compelling him to present himself to the prosecutor's office. Hence, he can be arrested at any time.
- **Dashgin Agararl**, citizen of Azerbaijan, was detained on Turkey-Georgia border. He asks Georgia for the status of political refugee. Dashgin Agararl, is a member of opposition political party, Musavat. He often participated in the protest actions and manifestations held in Azerbaijan, has been criticizing government of Azerbaijan by means of media and expressing protest regarding human rights violations in Azerbaijan. Due to his activism, he has been persecuted by government of Azerbaijan and was forced to leave the country. Case materials raise reasonable suspicion that the charges imposed against Dashgin Agararl regarding tax evasion are politically motivated and are not grounded by any evidence. Human Rights House Tbilisi and its member organizations consider that Dashgin Agararl must be granted political asylum and status of refugee; he must not be transferred to the state of Azerbaijan considering reasonable fear that he might become victim of political persecution in Azerbaijan. Transferring him to government of Azerbaijan might endanger his life and health as well.

Human Rights House Tbilisi and its member organizations:

- **Article 42 of the Constitution;**
- **Georgian Centre for Psycho-social and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (GCRT);**
- **Human Rights Centre (HRIDC);**
- **Human Rights and Conflict Studies- Caucasia;**
- **Media Institute;**
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