

URGENT ACTION

AZERI ACTIVIST CONSCRIPTED DESPITE ILL-HEALTH

Azeri activist Ulvi Hasanli has been conscripted for military service, despite being in ill-health, and sent to the zone of the unresolved conflict around Nagorno-Karabakh. Following a medical examination in September 2017, he was exempted from military service until 2019 on grounds of ill-health; an ultrasound showed he had inflamed kidney and kidney stones. However late in October the decision was reversed and he was detained and taken to a military base to begin his military service. Amnesty International believes he is being targeted because of his peaceful activism.

Ulvi Hasanli, activist and member of pro-democracy youth movement NIDA, received his call up for army service in September 2017. The same month he was examined by the State Service for Mobilization and Conscription (SSMC) to determine his fitness for military service. The examination revealed that he was suffering from rheumatism and kidney disease, which would make him unfit to serve in the military. His conscription was deferred until 2019. In early October 2017, Ulvi Hasanli was summoned to the SSMC again for another medical exam. An ultrasound scan showed that he had an inflamed kidney and kidney stones; he was asked to come back for another examination later that month. On 25 October, during the third medical examination, which was also attended by SSMC high level official and military police, Ulvi Hasanli was told that his kidneys were healthy and that there was no longer a medical reason for delaying his conscription. He was then detained by military officers and taken directly to a military service base with no opportunity to see his family.

Ulvi Hasanli's lawyer brought a case to the Baku Military Court, challenging the legality of his client's conscription and asking for an independent medical examination to determine if Ulvi Hasanli was fit for military service. On 3 November 2017, Baku Military Court dismissed the complaint. On 13 November 2017, Baku Appeals Court rejected the lawyer's appeal of the 3 November court decision. In January, Ulvi Hasanli was sent to the zone of the unresolved territorial conflict between the Azerbaijani forces and the forces of the Armenia-backed breakaway territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

NIDA have stated that the authorities ignored Ulvi Hasanli's medical condition and conscripted him in retaliation for his activism and in particular, his campaign in support of arrested NIDA activists, including prisoners of conscience Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov. Ulvi Hasanli has a history of being targeted by the authorities for his activism. In the past, he has been sentenced to administrative detention and issued fines for participating in anti-government protests. Over the last five years, at least 14 NIDA activists have been imprisoned on a range of trumped-up charges, most of which related to arms and drug possession.

Please write immediately in Azeri, Russian, English or your own language calling on the authorities to:

- Immediately restore the exemption of Ulvi Hasanli from military service on health grounds;
- End the harassment of activists and the use of politically motivated army conscriptions.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 MARCH 2018 TO:

Minister of Defence

Colonel General Hasanov Zakir Asgar

Oglu

3 Parliament Avenue
Baku AZ1073, Azerbaijan

Email: mninfo@asumo.baku.az

Salutation: Dear Minister

Chief of the State Service for

Mobilisation and Conscription

Arzu Rahimov

30 Zarifa Aliyeva Street, AZ-1000
Baku, Azerbaijan

Fax: +994 12 493 1535

Email: info@seferberlik.gov.az

Salutation: Dear Lieutenant-General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR TAHIR TAGHIZADE, Embassy of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 4 Kensington Court, London, W8 5DL tel: 020 7938 3412 email: london@mission.mfa.gov.az,

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Azerbaijani authorities have previously used army conscription as a measure to retaliate against young activists. In 2012, activist and former prisoner of conscience, Jabbar Savalan was conscripted into the army despite being exempt from military service as a full time student. In 2011, activist and blogger Bakhtyar Hajiev was sentenced to two years in prison for evasion of military service, despite being exempt from military service as a student and parliamentary election candidate.

Amnesty International has longstanding concerns about the Azerbaijani authorities' failure to respect their international obligations to protect the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and their routine discrimination and reprisals against those who try to exercise these rights. Activists are often imprisoned on trumped-up or politically motivated charges in retaliation for their work or statements critical of the authorities. Ill-treatment and beatings in detention are also commonly reported.

There has been growing number of cases of increasingly serious harassment, intimidation and persecution of activists, bloggers, journalists and human rights defenders by the Azerbaijani authorities in recent years. The string of arrests and various forms of harassment of prominent human rights defenders and other civil society activists, in connection with their professional activities, has effectively made it impossible for civil society in Azerbaijan to function.

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