

URGENT ACTION

RELEASE YOUTH ACTIVISTS AND INVESTIGATE TORTURE

Azerbaijani youth activists Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov have been in detention since 10 May, accused of drug possession, after painting political graffiti on the former President's statue. Bayram Mammadov went on hunger strike on 20 May in protest against the lack of investigation into their torture allegations.

Azerbaijani youth activists **Bayram Mammadov** and **Giyas Ibrahimov** have been in detention since 10 May falsely accused of drug possession. They were arrested after painting political graffiti on the statue of Heydar Aliyev, Azerbaijan's late former president and the father of the current president, Ilham Aliyev, on 9 May, and posting a photo of the graffiti on Facebook.

After being arrested for the purported drug possession, Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov were only questioned by police about the graffiti. They were tortured after they refused to sign confessions and publicly apologise for their protest. Their lawyer, who was allowed to meet them and saw their injuries, published a letter written by Bayram Mammadov in which the activist described his ordeal, including severe repeated beatings and threats of rape. On 20 May Bayram Mammadov went on hunger strike, after the authorities refused to investigate their allegations of torture.

Their lawyer's request to place the two men under house arrest instead of pre-trial detention has been declined. Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov have not been allowed meetings with their families.

Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov are prisoners of conscience, arrested on trumped-up criminal charges, which have been brought against them in connection with their public political protest.

Please write immediately in Azerbaijani, English or your own language:

- Urging the Azerbaijani authorities to release Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov immediately and drop the false drug-related charges brought against them in connection with their activism;
- Calling on them to carry out an effective, prompt and impartial investigation into their allegations of torture and ill-treatment and the fabrication of false charges, and bring all those found responsible to justice;
- Insisting on full respect for, and protection of, the right to freedom of expression in Azerbaijan.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 JULY TO:

President Ilham Aliyev
Office of the President of Azerbaijan
19 Istiqlaliyyat Street
Baku AZ1066, Azerbaijan
Fax: +994 12 492 0625
Email: office@pa.gov.az
Salutation: Dear President
Prosecutor General Zakir Garalov

7 Rafibeyli Street
Baku AZ1001, Azerbaijan
Email: info@prosecutor.gov.az
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Baku Detention Facility, Kurdakhany Settlement
(Bakı şəhəri Kürdəxanı qəsəbəsi, Bakı İstintaq Təcridxanası)
Sabuncu Rayon, AZ1059
Azerbaijan

And copies to:

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. This is the first update of UA 114/16. Further information:
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR55/4039/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In the night of 9 May Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov approached the statute of Heydar Aliyev in central Baku, Azerbaijan's capital. Giyas Ibrahimov painted political graffiti, using obscene language, on the statue. Bayram Mammadov took a photo of the graffiti and later shared it on Facebook.

Police arrested Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov on 10 May. Police officers questioned them about the graffiti and repeatedly demanded that the activists publicly apologize for insulting Heydar Aliyev, subjecting them to beatings and other ill-treatment when they refused. They also forced the activists to clean the police station's toilets while filming it, in order to humiliate them.

Delegates of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention visited Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov and confirmed with the local media on 25 May that the activists had bruises on their bodies.

The Azerbaijani authorities claim that police discovered around eight grams of heroin on 10 May in the activists' possession. According to Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov's lawyer the drugs were planted on them, in the presence of "witnesses" who were not independent but worked for the Azerbaijani police. Amnesty International has exposed previous uses of this practice in Azerbaijan. It has been used to fabricate false evidence against government critics, including political activists and human rights defenders, to justify their arrest and incarceration.

Amnesty International has longstanding concerns about the Azerbaijani authorities' failure to respect international obligations to protect the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Dissenting voices in the country frequently face trumped-up criminal charges, physical assault, harassment, blackmail and other reprisals from the authorities and groups associated with them. Law-enforcement officials regularly use torture and other ill-treatment against detained civil society activists, with impunity.

Khadija Ismayilova, a prominent Azerbaijani investigative journalist and a prisoner of conscience, was conditionally released on 25 May by the Supreme Court of Azerbaijan. In March 2016 Azerbaijan released eight prisoners of conscience, including the human rights lawyer Intigam Aliyev, the human rights campaigner Rasul Jafarov, and the head of the local election monitoring watchdog, Anar Mammadli. However, at least six prisoners of conscience still remain behind bars and the ongoing reprisals make human rights work virtually impossible. Most prominent NGOs working on human rights, corruption or election monitoring have criminal cases pending against them, their accounts frozen and/or registration revoked.

Independent monitoring of human rights in Azerbaijan is increasingly difficult. Several international human rights organizations and international media were barred from entering Azerbaijan in 2015. Amnesty International's delegation was refused entry into Azerbaijan and deported from the Baku Heydar Aliyev International Airport on 7 October 2015.

Further information on UA: 114/16 Index: EUR 55/4172/2016 Issue Date: 1 June 2016