

URGENT ACTION

YOUTH ACTIVISTS DETAINED, SPEAK OF ILL-TREATMENT

Youth activists **Bayram Mammadov** and **Giyas Ibrahimov** were arrested on 10 May in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, for alleged drug possession after they painted political graffiti on the former President's statue. According to their lawyer, they have been beaten and otherwise ill-treated in detention.

Youth activists **Bayram Mammadov** and **Giyas Ibrahimov** were detained by police in Baku on 10 May on drug-related charges. Bayram Mammadov is a member of the pro-democracy youth movement NIDA. Both activists are 22 years old. Giyas Ibrahimov and Bayram Mammadov told their lawyer that the drugs had been planted on them by police, and then "discovered" in the presence of "witnesses" who work for the police. On 12 May, the judge at Khatai District Court in Baku approved their pre-trial detention for four months. They are held at the Baku Detention Facility at the Kurdakhany Settlement. If convicted, the activists could face up to 12 years in prison.

The arrest happened a day after Bayram Mammadov posted a photo of the graffiti which Giyas Ibrahimov and he had painted on 9 May over the statue of Heydar Aliyev. Heydar Aliyev is Azerbaijan's late former president and the father of the current president, Ilham Aliyev. The activists used obscene language in the graffiti as a message of political protest.

During questioning by the police, Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov were asked questions about the graffiti, not about the drugs. Police officers repeatedly demanded that the activists publicly apologize for insulting Heydar Aliyev and subjected them to beatings when they refused. They also forced the activists to clean the police station's toilets while filming it, in order to humiliate them. Their lawyer told Amnesty International that during a meeting with Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov on 12 May he saw the bruises resulting from the beatings. The activists have not been examined by an independent doctor and have not been allowed to contact their family members to date. The lawyer filed a complaint about their ill-treatment with the Office of the Prosecutor General of Azerbaijan.

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

- Expressing concern that the criminal charges against Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov appear to be politically motivated and based on fabricated evidence;
- Insisting that Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov are examined by an independent forensic expert and their injuries are appropriately documented;
- Calling on the authorities to carry out an immediate, effective and impartial investigation into their allegations of their ill-treatment and the fabrication of false charges.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 JUNE 2016 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 Raffibeyli 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

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

According to the lawyer of Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov, the Azerbaijani authorities claim that police discovered around eight grams of heroin in possession of the activists on 9 May. The lawyer claims that the drug charges were fabricated and that the real reason for their arrest was the painting of the graffiti.

The lawyer also told Amnesty International that the witnesses who testified about the drugs found were not independent as they work for the Azerbaijani police. Amnesty International documented similar practice that has been used in Azerbaijan to fabricate evidence in other cases against activists and human rights defenders.

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. 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.

In March 2016, Azerbaijan released eight prisoners of conscience, including prominent human rights lawyer Intigam Aliyev, human rights campaigner Rasul Jafarov, and the head of the local election monitoring watchdog, Anar Mammadli. However, at least seven 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.

Names: Bayram Mammadov and Giyas Ibrahimov

Gender m/f: m

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