



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE  
FOUNDATION

29<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

□ Geneva (Switzerland)  
24 June 2015

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Item 4

Check against delivery

**This joint statement is delivered by the Human Rights House Foundation on behalf of a joint NGOs coalition, composed as following:**

ARTICLE 19, Association UMDPL, Belarusian Human Rights House (on behalf of Belarus Watch - By Watch, Belarusian Association of Journalists, Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Belarusian PEN Centre, City Public Association "Centar Supolnasc", Human Rights Centre "Viasna"), Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Center for Civil Liberties (Ukraine), Freedom Now, Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims-GCRT, Health and Human Rights Info (Norway), Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR), Human Rights House Zagreb (on behalf of APEO/UPIM Association for Promotion of Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities, Be aware- be emancipated B.a.B.e.), CMS - Centre for Peace Studies, Documenta - Centre for Dealing with the Past, GOLJP - Civic Committee for Human Rights, Sytanjje - Association for Protection and Promotion of Mental Health), Index on Censorship, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), No Borders Project "Social Action Centre" (Ukraine), Rafto Foundation for Human Rights, Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT).

Azerbaijani NGOs endorsing this statement have not been included for security reasons.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson,

**The European Games are almost over in Baku, as part of Azerbaijan's glamorous promotion. At the same time, the repression reached an unprecedented level and leading human rights defenders, journalists and activists are detained.**

**Disregarding protections under domestic or international law, the authorities in Azerbaijan have indeed arrested:**

- Key journalists, such as Khadija Ismayilova and Rauf Mirkadirov;
- Political opposition leaders such as Ilgar Mammadov, Tofiq Yaqublou or Yadigar Sadiqli;
- Youth activists such as Omar Mammadov and other NIDA movement activists;
- Leading human rights defenders Leyla and Arif Yunus<sup>1</sup>, Rasul Jafarov<sup>2</sup>, Anar Mammadli, Hilal Mammadov;
- The best-known human rights lawyer in the country, Intigam Aliyev, has recently been sentenced to 7.5 years imprisonment.

**We are particularly concerned about the health conditions of Integam Alyev, Leyla Yunus and Arif Yunus, which require immediate medical attention. As a matter of basic humanitarian principles, Azerbaijan should stop denying medical care to those leading civil society figures in detention, and ensure that they are receiving complete and necessary treatment for all medical concerns.**

<sup>1</sup> See also: <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/20302.html>

<sup>2</sup> See also: <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/20306.html>

Central to the government's strategy to suppress criticism is the employment of politically-motivated criminal prosecutions and detentions. The scope of the individuals being targeted, including internationally-known and respected HRDs, and the seriousness of the charges and length of prison sentences that are being imposed against them, set the current crackdown apart from past repression.

**Azerbaijan uses three strategies to silence, punish and to imprison its critics:**

- **First, authorities rely on "politically-motivated charges," such as inciting hatred, mass disorder, and treason;**
- **Second, authorities have been known to resort to "fabricated charges," including drug and weapon charges, hooliganism, embezzlement, and service forgery.**
- **Third, with the adoption of laws restricting the registration and functioning of NGOs, including access to foreign funding, the government has abused of special "organization-directed charges" that have targeted primarily the leaders of prominent NGOs in Azerbaijan, such as illegal business activity, tax evasion, or abuse of office, and rely upon a deeply flawed legal theory.**

**The government has also undertaken steps to eliminate independent monitoring bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as ordering in June 2015 the halt of OSCE operations in the country and imposing the closure of hundreds of International NGOS.**

**We call upon this Human Rights Council to request from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to present to the Human Rights Council, in an interactive dialogue, a comprehensive report on the human rights situation and the environment for human rights defenders in Azerbaijan.**

**We call upon Azerbaijan to put an end to the unprecedented repression against civil society and to immediately and unconditionally release and rehabilitate the civil and political rights of all prisoners of conscience. We further call upon the authorities to drop all charges and investigations pending against journalists, political opposition leaders, grassroots activists, human rights defenders, lawyers, and their organizations.**

**Azerbaijan should furthermore take concrete steps to prevent and stop the use of legislation to unduly hinder the ability of human rights defenders, journalists and activists to exercise their work, in compliance with standards set in the resolution 22/6 of 21 March 2013 of the United Nations Human Rights Council**

**Thank you Mr chairperson**