



**HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE  
FOUNDATION**

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*Oslo and Geneva, 17 May 2012*

**Call for the release and rehabilitation for the prisoners arrested in relation to the mobilization of protest actions in 2011 and 2012**

Mr. President,  
Mr. Minister,

We call upon you to ensure that the imprisoned activists Bakhtiyar Hajiyev, Zulfuqar Eyvazli, Babak Hasanov, Sahib Karimov, Ahad Mammadli, Ulvi Guliyev, Rufat Hajibeyli, Vidadi Iskanderli, Shahin Hasanov are immediately and unconditionally released and full rehabilitation is provided.

The **Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)** would also like to express its support to the **appeal of the imprisoned Azerbaijani blogger and youth activist Bakhtiyar Hajiyev for his early release**, to be reviewed at a court hearing scheduled for Monday 21 May 2012. We call upon you to ensure that his case is reconsidered without any delay. Bakhtiyar Hajiyev should be immediately released as he is now eligible for parole under the Azerbaijani laws after serving half of the term of his sentence.

In May 2011, Bakhtiyar Hajiyev, Azerbaijani blogger and youth activist, was sentenced to two years imprisonment on charges of evading military service. The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, however, provides its citizens with a right to alternative service, which Bakhtiyar Hajiyev intended to exercise, refusing the official call for military service.

HRHF is concerned about his imprisonment and believes that such a persecution of Bakhtiyar Hajiyev is directly linked to his political and civic activism in Azerbaijan. Bakhtiyar Hajiyev, the recent Harvard graduate, participated in the parliamentary elections in November 2010 as the opposition candidate, calling for democratic reforms in Azerbaijan. Soon after the elections, he posted videos on social

networks condemning the results of the elections. Bakhtiyar Hajiyev was arrested on 4 March 2011, after he called for support to “Great People’s Day” anti-governmental demonstrations on Facebook.

We believe that the imprisonment of Bakhtiyar Hajiyev as well as the one of other activists are a clear retaliation against them for exercising his freedom of expression. We consider Bakhtiyar Hajiyev to be yet another victim of an increasing pressure and growing persecution of critical voices, including activists using social networks and peaceful protesters in Azerbaijan.

We therefore call upon you to ensure that Bakhtiyar Hajiyev and other 12 imprisoned opposition activists are immediately and unconditionally released and full rehabilitation is provided.

We also remind the Azerbaijani authorities of their international obligations to ensure the right of freedom of expression to its citizens and call upon them to abide with the commitments.

Sincerely,



Maria Dahle  
Executive Director

Human Rights House Foundation

*The Human Rights House Foundation, based in Oslo (Norway) and Geneva (Switzerland), is the secretariat of the Human Rights House Network. The Human Rights House Network is a forum of cooperation between established and emerging Human Rights Houses, uniting 70 NGOs in 15 countries in Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, East and Horn of Africa, and Western Europe. HRHN’s aim is to protect, strengthen and support human rights defenders and their organizations.*

*Established as an international branch of HRHF, the Azerbaijan Human Rights House opened in 2009. In accordance with the order of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan of 10 March 2011, the Azerbaijan Human Rights House ceased its activities.*