



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE
FOUNDATION

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Item 3

Interactive dialogue with the United Nations
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Human Rights House Foundation statement

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Thank you, Mr Chairperson,

The Human Rights House Foundation welcomes the reports of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, including the one to the General Assembly on legislation affecting human rights defenders (UN Doc: A/67/292). We echo the Special Rapporteur's concern that "recent legislative developments in a number of countries are not in compliance with international human rights standards, notably the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and do not contribute to a conducive working environment for defenders."¹ **We are as concerned as the Special Rapporteur by the fact that more and more countries misuse or design legislation in order to impede or even criminalise the work of human rights defenders, or to label them as "foreign agents" such as in the Russian Federation, as underlined by the Special Rapporteur in her public statement of 12 July 2012.**²

We wish to welcome the communications issued on events in the Republic of Azerbaijan, as published in the addendum to her report (UN Doc: A/HRC/22/47/Add.4), including the ones about the closure of the Azerbaijan Human Rights House on 16 March 2011 and about the warnings against 2 NGOs threatened to be closed for their online publications on 5 March 2012.³ We regret that this communication has not received an answer to date. We also regret that Azerbaijan has not to date replied to the communication of the Special Rapporteur in relation to the arrest of photographer and blogger Mehman Huseynov⁴, case we already brought to the attention of the Council in July 2012.⁵

¹ Report on Situation of human rights defenders to the General Assembly, 10 August 2012, § 83 (UN Doc: A/67/292).

² See: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=12344&LangID=E>.

³ See: [https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/20th/AL_Azerbaijan_05.03.12_\(1.2012\).pdf](https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/20th/AL_Azerbaijan_05.03.12_(1.2012).pdf).

⁴ See: [https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/22nd/public-UA_Azerbaijan_27.06.12_\(4.2012\).pdf](https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/22nd/public-UA_Azerbaijan_27.06.12_(4.2012).pdf).

⁵ See: <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/18313.html>.

Azerbaijan continues to use detention of human rights defenders as a tool to silence them. Most recently, on Saturday 26 January 2013, Intigam Aliyev was amongst 47 other demonstrators arrested for peacefully protesting in Baku.⁶ He is awarded as we speak here in Geneva with the Homo Homini Award for human rights in Prague, for his exceptional and courageous work in favour of human rights. We call upon Azerbaijan to cancel Intigam Aliyev's disbarment and stop harassing and impeding his NGO, a close partner of the Azerbaijan Human Rights House. The highest penalty in relation to this protest was imposed on Emin Milli who was sentenced to administrative detention for 15 days for promoting the peaceful protest on Facebook in violation of article 298.1 and 298.2 of the code of the Republic of Azerbaijan on administrative offences.⁷ Emin Milli was previously detained for 16 months along with Adnan Hajizade for publishing a critical video on Youtube.

As we underline in our written statement to the Human Rights Council⁸, developments in Azerbaijan indeed show the authorities aim at silencing critical voices, including by ordering the Human Rights House to cease all its activities.

In addition to legislative measures repressive practices are equally unacceptable – and Azerbaijan is only one example of this situation.

Mr. Chairperson,

We believe the Human Rights Council needs to take strong action to underline that legislation affecting the work of human rights defenders, especially their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, should be in line with international human rights law, notably the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Thank you.

⁶ <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/19049.html>

⁷ See: <http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/details.jsp?id=9210>.

⁸ Joint written statement submitted to the Human Rights Council by the Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF), Be Active Be Emancipated B.a.B.e, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Institute for Peace and Democracy, Legal education Society, Human Rights Club, Media Rights Institute, Human Rights Centre of Azerbaijan, Public Union of Democracy and Human Rights Resource Centre, Nakhchivan Regional Resource Centre for NGO Development and Democracy, Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, 25 February 2013 (UN Doc: A/HRC/22/NGO/152).