

URGENT ACTION

LEYLA YUNUS DENIED LAWYERS OF HER CHOICE

Two main lawyers representing Azerbaijani human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Leyla Yunus have been removed from her case, while the third lawyer is facing criminal charges of libel apparently in retaliation for representing her.

On 29 October **Javad Javadov**, a lawyer who has been representing **Leyla Yunus** since her arrest on 30 July was removed from the case, shortly after he highlighted the procedural shortcomings and other fair trial violations in the ongoing judicial process. On 5 November **Khalid Bagirov**, the second main lawyer representing Leyla Yunus, was also banned from defending her. Both lawyers, despite having only professional involvement in the case, were summoned as witnesses by the prosecutor, following which they were refused access to Leyla Yunus and were informed that they were removed from the case because of a purported conflict of interest. They were not given any official explanation of this decision. Another lawyer who was acting for Leyla Yunus, **Alayif Huseynov**, has been charged with criminal libel by her former cellmate after he publicized allegations she had made about being threatened and ill-treated in prison during her detention.

The removal of the two principal lawyers who have been representing Leyla Yunus since her arrest, as well as criminal charges brought against a third lawyer who spoke out on her behalf, amount to a violation of her right to be represented by a lawyer of her choice, which is an essential element of the right to fair trial. Amnesty International has previously documented cases in Azerbaijan where lawyers have been threatened, disbarred and pursued with politically-motivated disciplinary and criminal sanctions for representing opposition leaders and government critics.

Leyla Yunus was arrested on 30 July on trumped-up charges of treason and other crimes. Her husband **Arif Yunus** was arrested on 5 August on similar charges. Amnesty International considers that Leyla and Arif Yunus are both prisoners of conscience.

Please write immediately in Azeri, English, Russian or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to release Leyla Yunus and Arif Yunus, immediately and unconditionally;
- Expressing concern that Leyla Yunus has been denied the right to be defended by lawyers of her choice, which is an essential element of the right to fair trial;
- Insisting on full respect for, and protection of, the right to freedom of expression in Azerbaijan.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 DECEMBER 2014 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 Aliyev

Prosecutor General

Zakir Qaralov
Office of the Prosecutor General
7 Rafibeyli Street
Baku AZ1001, Azerbaijan
Email: info@prosecutor.gov.az

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the fourth update of UA 182/14. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/018/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Leyla Yunus is the President of the Azerbaijani NGO, the Institute for Peace and Democracy. She was arrested on 30 July 2014 on the charges of treason (purportedly spying for Armenia), tax evasion, forgery, fraud, and illegal business in relation to a grant received by her NGO which she had been prevented by the authorities from registering. Her husband, Arif Yunus, was arrested on 5 August. Arif Yunus is also facing criminal charges of treason, tax evasion and fraud in connection with his involvement in the activities of the Institute for Peace and Democracy.

On 23 September, Leyla Yunus was nominated for the prestigious Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.

Amnesty International has longstanding concerns about the Azerbaijani authorities' failure to respect their international obligations to protect the rights to freedoms of expression, association and 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.

Amnesty International has recognized 21 people as prisoners of conscience in Azerbaijan, jailed solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression. For more information, see *Behind bars: Silencing dissent in Azerbaijan* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/004/2014/en>); *Azerbaijan: Another prominent human rights defender thrown behind the bars* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/010/2014/en>); UA 200/14 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/011/2014/en>); and UA 186/14 and updates (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/013/2014/en>).

Azerbaijan currently chairs the Committee of Ministers, the main decision-making body of the Council of Europe, an organization considered the guardian of human rights in Europe.

Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, will host the inaugural European Games in June 2015. The 2015 European Games will be the first major multi-sport event for Europe and will involve around 6,000 European athletes. Shortly before her arrest, on 25 July, Leyla Yunus organized a press conference at which she called for an international boycott of the European Games because of Azerbaijan's dire human rights record.

Name: Leyla Yunus (f), Arif Yunus (m), Javad Javadov (m), Khalid Bagirov (m), Alayif Huseynov (m)
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 182/14 Index: EUR 55/021/2014 Issue Date: 11 November 2014