

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVISTS JAILED FOR CRITICISING GOVERNMENT

Two opposition activists in Azerbaijan have been sentenced to several years in prison on fabricated charges, simply for being critical of the Government. Their lawyers are planning to appeal the judgment.

On 17 March the Shaki District Court in north-western Azerbaijan announced its verdict against **Tofiq Yagublu** and **Ilgar Mammadov** – two prisoners of conscience who were arrested more than a year ago after travelling to observe riots in the Azerbaijani city of Ismayili. They were sentenced to five and seven years in prison respectively.

Tofiq Yagublu and Ilgar Mammadov were accused of inciting violent anti-government riots on 23-24 January 2013 in Ismayili when people took to the streets after the nephew of the local governor reportedly assaulted a local man in a 'road rage' incident. According to the lawyers, no evidence has been presented to prove that the accused have committed a crime or incited others to do so. The two political leaders have no history of advocating or inciting violence.

Tofiq Yagublu and Ilgar Mammadov arrived in Ismayili solely to investigate the underlying tensions which had led to the unrest and to monitor the reaction of local authorities. By the time they arrived, the riots in Ismayili were already ongoing.

Tofiq Yagublu and Ilgar Mammadov are both well-known critics of President Ilham Aliyev's government. Tofiq Yagublu is an independent Azeri journalist and the deputy chair of the opposition Musavat party and Ilgar Mammadov is leader of the Azeri opposition group REAL.

Their lawyers are planning to appeal the verdict of the Shaki District Court in the upcoming days.

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

- Calling for immediate and unconditional release of Tofiq Yagublu and Ilgar Mammadov, as they are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 APRIL 2014 TO:

President
 Ilham Aliyev
 Office of the President of the
 Azerbaijan Republic
 19 Istiqlaliyyat Street
 Baku AZ1066, Azerbaijan
 Fax: + 994 12 492 0625
 Email: office@pa.gov.az
Salutation: Dear President

Prosecutor General
 Zakir Qaralov
 7 Rafibeyli Street
 Baku, AZ 1001
 Azerbaijan
 Fax: +994 12 492 32 30
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.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

There are at least 17 prisoners of conscience in Azerbaijan, recognized as such by Amnesty International, imprisoned solely in connection with their attempts to peacefully exercise their right to freedom of expression.

Authorities in Azerbaijan have been using different means of repression to stop members of the opposition, social activists and journalists from criticizing them. Threats, harassment, and acts of violence against political opposition, journalists and civil society activists are being carried out by law enforcement officials with impunity, leading to an increase in self-censorship. Civil defamation laws are being used to silence criticism resulting in heavy fines against journalists. Due to the pressure and threats from the authorities, some of the political opponents have lost their jobs and businesses.

Name: Tofiq Yagublu and Ilgar Mammadov

Gender m/f: m

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