

URGENT ACTION

KARIMOV BROTHERS TORTURED IN CUSTODY

Azerbaijani political activist Faraj Karimov and his brother Siraj Karimov have complained of torture in detention to make them “confess” to drug-related crimes.

Azerbaijani political activist Faraj Karimov was visited by his lawyer on 2 August after being held incommunicado for 10 days. Faraj Karimov told his lawyer that he had been beaten by police to make him admit to drug-related charges. He was threatened that unless he signed a “confession”, police would “cause problems to his parents” by planting weapons at their house.

Although held on drug-related charges, Faraj Karimov was questioned about his political and social activities. Police asked him about the Facebook groups and pages he manages, which are well-known for their criticism of the Azerbaijani government. He was also asked for information about his fellow activists at the opposition political party Musavat.

His brother, Siraj Karimov, who had been arrested six days earlier, was also allegedly tortured by police. He claims he was pressured to sign a confession to drug-related charges and was asked questions by police about his brother. Siraj Karimov had not been involved in activism himself, but his family have insisted that he was targeted because of his brother’s work.

Amnesty International has documented regular use of trumped-up drug-related charges in Azerbaijan against political activists and their family members, and considers Faraj Karimov and Siraj Karimov prisoners of conscience.

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

- Calling on the authorities to release Faraj and Siraj Karimov immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging them to ensure the brothers’ safety and freedom from threats, harassment and persecution;
- Calling for an immediate, impartial and effective investigation of Faraj and Siraj Karimov’s allegations that they have been tortured and otherwise ill-treated and forced to testify against themselves.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 SEPTEMBER 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

7 Rafibeyli Street

Baku AZ1001, Azerbaijan

Fax: +994 12 492 0335

Email: info@prosecutor.gov.az

z.qaralov@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 first update of UA 186/14. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/008/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International has longstanding concerns about the Azerbaijani authorities' failure to respect their international obligations to protect the rights to freedom 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.

Prior to his arrest, Faraj Karimov was managing Facebook groups "Resign" and "Stop", members of which have called for resignation of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. Faraj Karimov was also circulating political satire posts about Azerbaijani government from his profile on Facebook, where he has thousands of followers. Faraj Karimov was coordinating online election campaign of the opposition Presidential candidate Jamil Hasanli in 2013.

Members of families of political and civil activists are often targeted by the Azerbaijani authorities as a means of pressure on the activists.

Amnesty International has documented dozens of cases like that of Faraj and Siraj Karimov, and as of 15 August has recognized 24 other prisoners of conscience in Azerbaijan, jailed solely for their peaceful attempts to exercise 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>); *Azerbaijan: Leyla Yunus in failing health in prison* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/012/2014/en>); *Azerbaijan: Activist detained on trumped-up charges: Intigam Aliyev* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/011/2014/en>).

Name: Faraj Karimov, Siraj Karimov

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 186/14 Index: EUR 55/013/2014 Issue Date: 15 August 2014