

Reporters Without Borders

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Europe/Ex-USSR - Azerbaijan

Outrage

Khadija Ismayilova completes six months in arbitrary detention

4 June 2015

Reporters Without Borders reiterates its call for the immediate release of Azerbaijani journalist Khadija Ismayilova, who completes six months of arbitrary pre-trial detention by Ilham Aliyev's authoritarian regime tomorrow.

A pioneer of Azerbaijani journalistic investigation into high-level government corruption, **Ismayilova** has been held ever [since her arrest](#) on a trumped-up charge on 5 December.

"As Baku prepares to host the first European Olympic Games and to receive visitors from all over the continent, no one should ignore the enormous scandal of Khadija Ismayilova's continuing arbitrary detention," said Johann Bühr, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk.

"Despite imprisonment, health problems and frequent spells of solitary confinement, she continues to fight and [to send frequent combative and confident messages](#) to colleagues who are still free. Foreign journalists going to Baku should not shut their eyes to this. They should alert the entire world about the crackdown in Azerbaijan."

Ismayilova was originally accused of encouraging a fellow journalist to make a suicide attempt but he subsequently retracted, saying security officials pressured him into filing his complaint against her.

[Four new charges](#) of large-scale embezzlement, illegal trading, tax evasion and abuse of authority were brought against her February, as [the authorities linked her case to the one against the Baku bureau of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which Ismayilova once headed](#).

No date has been set for her trial, at which she is now facing a possible 12-year jail sentence. Her lawyers have repeatedly petitioned for her release but all their requests have been rejected. Her pre-trial detention was extended for another three months on 15 May.

Whenever she manages to smuggle a letter out of prison, she is given another spell in solitary.

Azerbaijan is ranked 162nd in the [2015 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#) after one of [the biggest performance score falls](#) of any of the 180 countries in the index because of its unprecedented crackdown on the few remaining government critics and independent voices during the past year.

In addition to Ismayilova, seven journalists and four information activists are currently detained in connection with their reporting.

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