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First UA: 42/24 Index: EUR 55/8053/2024 Azerbaijan of May 16, 2024

AZERBAIJAN

DEMAND THE RELEASE OF UNJUSTLY DETAINED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

Anar Mammadli, a prominent human rights defender and climate advocate, was arrested on April 29, 2024, by Azerbaijani authorities. They charged him with conspiracy to unlawfully bring money into the country, a clear attempt to crack down on civil society activists. On April 30, 2024, Anar was placed in pre-trial detention. If convicted, he faces up to eight years in prison. These charges are fabricated and aim to retaliate against his criticism of the government and his activism.

Write to the President of Azerbaijan urging the government to:

- Ensure Anar Mammadli's immediate and unconditional release and end the misuse of the criminal justice system to target him and other critics of the government in Azerbaijan.
- End sustained efforts to silence dissent and ensure the compliance of Azerbaijan with its international human rights obligations.

Write to:

Ilham Aliyev
President of Azerbaijan
19 Istiqlaliyyat Street
Baku AZ1066
Azerbaijan
Email: office@pa.gov.az

Salutation: Your Excellency,

And copy:

Mr. Vasif Cingiz Oglu ABUTALIBOV
Chargé d'affaires, a.i.
Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan
275 Slater Street, Suite 1203
Ottawa, ON K1P 5H9
Tel: (613) 288-0497 Fax: (613) 230-8089
Email: reception@azembassy.ca

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Anar Mammadli is a well-known human rights defender and the Head of the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre. He co-founded the Climate of Justice Initiative, a group promoting civic space and environmental justice at the upcoming 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku. Anar was one of the first activists in Azerbaijan to connect human rights and climate justice, advocating internationally at the UN Human Rights Council and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

On April 29, 2024, while on his way to pick up his child from nursery, Anar Mammadli was apprehended by masked men and driven away in a black vehicle. Family members reported that police searched his house and allegedly planted money. The Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed his detention, with his sister revealing he was suspected of “smuggling by prior conspiracy by a group of persons” under Article 206.3.2 of the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan.

Anar was denied access to his lawyer overnight at a temporary detention center in Baku. On April 30, 2024, the Khatai District Court of Baku placed him in pre-trial detention until the end of August 2024. Baku Appellate Court heard an appeal against his arrest on May 6 but did not grant it.

In 2014, Amnesty International recognized Anar Mammadli as a Prisoner of Conscience after he received a five-and-a-half-year prison sentence on false charges of tax evasion, illegal entrepreneurship, and abuse of office. While imprisoned, he was awarded the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) for his outstanding contributions to civil society.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled that his 2013 arrest violated several articles protecting liberty and security, but Azerbaijani authorities failed to comply with the judgment. Though pardoned in 2016, Anar has faced ongoing attacks from authorities and pro-government media, which have intensified leading up to COP29.

His current detention is part of a broader pattern of using the criminal justice system to silence government critics, including human rights defenders and journalists. Since last November, at least 11 journalists have been arrested on similar accusations, highlighting the ongoing crackdown on dissent in Azerbaijan.

Please take action as soon as possible until July 10, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.