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Third UA: 38/20 Index: EUR 55/8097/2024 Azerbaijan of May 31, 2024

AZERBAIJAN FREE PROMINENT OPPOSITION LEADER

On December 14, 2023, Azerbaijani authorities arrested Tofiq Yagublu, a well-known opposition leader and outspoken critic of the government. They charged him with forgery and fraud, accusations many believe to be false. This arrest is part of a larger crackdown on independent journalists and now includes one of the country's most vocal opposition figures.

The following day, December 15, a court ordered Yagublu to remain in pre-trial detention for four months, a period that has since been extended. Yagublu denies all charges and insists he is being targeted because of his political activities.

Write to the President of Azerbaijan urging him to:

- Take necessary steps that will ensure Tofiq Yagublu's immediate and unconditional release.
- End the misuse of the criminal justice system in Azerbaijan to target criticism and dissent.

Write to:

President of Azerbaijan
Ilham Aliyev
Office of the President of Azerbaijan
19 Istiqlaliyyat Street
Baku AZ1066, Azerbaijan
Email: office@pa.gov.az
Salutation: Dear President,

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

Tofiq Yagublu is a prominent opposition figure in Azerbaijan, a former journalist, and a vocal government critic. He is a member of the Musavat Party and a senior politician in the National Council of Democratic Forces, a coalition of opposition parties and activists. Yagublu has faced years of harassment for his peaceful activism.

On [December 14, 2023](#), police arrested Yagublu as he was exiting the metro in central Baku. About 20 officers searched his home the same day, claiming to find significant amounts of cash. They allege he conspired to provide fake documents for an asylum claim. On December 15, the Narimanov District Court of Baku ordered his pre-trial detention, citing unsubstantiated fears that he might flee or interfere with the investigation.

Yagublu has been repeatedly arrested for his political activism. In 2013, he was jailed for five years on charges of inciting mass violence. Amnesty International recognized him as a [prisoner of conscience](#), and the European Court of Human Rights ruled his detention violated his rights. He [was released in 2016](#) under a presidential pardon. In [subsequent years](#), Yagublu faced multiple arrests, accusations of hooliganism, and ill-treatment, including torture claims that were not investigated.

Yagublu's prosecution is part of a [broader crackdown on dissent](#) in Azerbaijan. Critics of the government often face trumped-up charges, unfair trials, and lengthy prison sentences. [This repression intensifies](#) ahead of major international events, such as the upcoming 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 29) in Baku. Amnesty International continues to document these human rights abuses.

Please take action as soon as possible until November 12, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.