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AZERBAIJAN

ACADEMICS FACE UP TO 20 YEARS IN PRISON FOR SPEAKING OUT

Igbal Abilov and Bahruz Samadov, both academics, were arrested on false charges, including “high treason.” Their arrest is seen as retaliation for their academic work and activism. Currently, they are being held in custody without access to visitors or any communication with their families. If convicted, they could face prison sentences of up to 20 years. Authorities must drop these fabricated charges and ensure their immediate release.

Write to the President of Azerbaijan urging him to:

- Take immediate action to end all politically motivated prosecutions and release Bahruz Samadov, Igbal Abilov, and all individuals arbitrarily detained or imprisoned for their dissenting or critical views in Azerbaijan.
- Release of academics, political and civic activists, journalists, and human rights defenders who have been unjustly imprisoned for exercising their right to free expression.

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 Aliyev,

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

Igbal Abilov, a historian and ethnographer, is an academic specializing in the ethnic minorities of the South Caucasus, Turkey, and Iran. He lectures on international relations at Belarusian State University and has authored several publications. As an ethnic Talysh, Abilov co-founded the Talysh National Academy in Belarus. According to [media reports](#), he has lived in Belarus since childhood.

During a visit to his family in Azerbaijan, Abilov was detained by Azerbaijani security forces. On June 22, 2024, he was questioned for six hours and released. When attempting to return to Belarus on June 27, authorities prevented him from boarding his flight, confiscating his passport. Abilov was arrested on July 22 and transferred to a detention center in Baku without notifying his family. On July 24, a court remanded him to four months in detention on charges of high treason, sedition, and incitement of ethnic hatred. Since his arrest, Abilov has been denied contact with his family. His lawyer, Fariz Namazli, was also detained briefly on August 31 but was released without charges.

Azerbaijan has [a history of prosecuting Talysh activists](#) who advocate for cultural or political autonomy. Many have faced fabricated charges, and some have died in custody due to alleged torture, ill-treatment, and denial of medical care. Igbal Abilov's arrest follows this disturbing pattern of repression against the Talysh community. His vocal advocacy for the rights of Talysh people and other national minorities in Azerbaijan has likely made him a target for the government.

Bahruz Samadov, a political science postgraduate at Charles University in Prague, is [known for his writings on the political situation in Azerbaijan](#), including critical views on the [Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict](#). He has participated in conferences and meetings aimed at promoting peace in the region.

On August 21, 2024, Samadov was arrested by Azerbaijan's State Security Service while visiting his home country during a break from his doctoral studies. Authorities searched his house, confiscating laptops, mobile devices, and his passport. Samadov faces charges of high treason. [Two of his journalist colleagues](#) were also detained for questioning and placed under travel bans. Samadov's work advocating for a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict may have made him a target for Azerbaijani authorities, who have a history of silencing peace activists.

The Azerbaijani government has intensified its crackdown on critical voices ahead of the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29), scheduled to be held in Baku. Scholars, journalists, and activists like Abilov and Samadov, who speak out against the government's policies, [are increasingly being targeted](#).

Both Abilov and Samadov are accused of treason, though there is no public evidence to support the charges. Media reports suggest their arrests may be linked to their participation in international academic conferences that included Armenian researchers. Their families believe that the real reason for their arrests is their critical research and activism. This is part of a broader trend in Azerbaijan, where the government abuses the legal system to suppress dissent.

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.