

EXTERNAL

12 May 1992

@Salman FARMANOV

£Azerbaijan

The information currently available on this case comes from an article in the leading newspaper Bakinsky rabochy (Baku worker) of 14 April 1992, which reported that Salman Farmanov was sentenced to death by the city court in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. The exact date of the trial is not known. Salman Farmanov was convicted of robbery, premeditated murder and attempted murder. It is not known whether an appeal against Salman Farmanov's sentence has been considered by the Supreme Court of Azerbaijan, or whether he has lodged a petition for clemency.

Salman Farmanov is 34 years old. He is married and has one child. He is a university graduate and has worked as an economist and as the head of the planning department in Baku. He has previous convictions for robbery and for being an accessory to murder. In an open letter to Bakinsky rabochy, Salman Farmanov admits to robbery but claims that he did not commit murder or attempted murder, and that these charges were falsely pinned on him by the prosecution, who based their evidence solely on contradictory statements by one of the three accomplices in this case. He wants the preliminary investigation into his case reopened and all the evidence against him re-examined and reassessed. According to Farmanov, roles had been allocated before the crime was committed and he had refused to have anything to do with the "liquidation of the victims". Murder was committed by the elder of the two co-accused, neither of whom was charged with murder.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases and without reservation, on the grounds that it is a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Amnesty International is appealing to the authorities in the Azerbaijani Republic to commute the death sentence passed on Salman Farmanov.

Background information

In a letter to Amnesty International in September 1991 the Azerbaijani Minister of Justice wrote that abolition of the death penalty in the republic would be premature. Nevertheless, the Minister indicated that Azerbaijan would endorse the recent reduction in the number of capital crimes under the then USSR law when it adopted "in the future" a new republican criminal code. This republican criminal code would reduce the number of offences carrying the death penalty to five; high treason, premeditated murder under aggravating circumstances, rape of a minor under aggravating circumstances, serious crimes committed against peace and humanity; and the kidnapping of children entailing grave consequences. In a follow-up letter to the Minister of Justice in April 1992 Amnesty International asked if the proposed exemption of women and minors from the death penalty and the proposed reduction outlined by the Minister had now passed into law in Azerbaijan.

The last execution in Azerbaydzhnan known to Amnesty International took place in 1990. Amnesty International currently knows of at least five ethnic Armenians sentenced to death for murder in Azerbaydzhnan and under threat of imminent execution. They were convicted by the Azerbaydzhnani Supreme Court in Baku on 19 March 1992, accused of murdering an Azerbaydzhnani correspondent and three military personnel in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh. An execution date of 2 April, just two weeks after the trial, was later replaced by a stay of execution until 16 May.