

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Amnesty International urges EBU to address human rights concerns in 2012 Eurovision host Azerbaijan**

Amnesty International is concerned that the organisers of Eurovision are not doing enough to promote the values they claim to represent in Azerbaijan, after the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) responded to the organization's launch of a Eurovision web feature and mass twitter action.

The EBU places democracy and media freedom at its heart, but has downplayed Azerbaijan's terrible human rights record by describing it as 'less than perfect'.

In doing so, they have signalled to the government that the crackdown on free expression can continue. In the past month alone, six journalists have been arrested and six peaceful protesters beaten up by police.

12 former Eurovision contestants and other artists, from 1967 British winner Sandie Shaw to the 2011 Finnish winner of Eurovision's Marcel Bezencon Press Award, Paradise Oskar, publicly condemned the Azerbaijani government's abuse of its citizens on a site launched yesterday.

The launch was accompanied by an action in which Amnesty supporters sent hundreds of tweets to @Eurovision, asking them to call on the Azerbaijani government to release 14 people held since last spring for taking part in peaceful protests.

The EBU responded stating it was working to improve media freedom in Azerbaijan but emphasised that "the aim of the Eurovision Song Contest is to unite Europe and of course, to generate a good time".

Meanwhile 14 Azerbaijanis remain behind bars for drawing attention to problematic living conditions in the country. Amnesty International is planning to continue its campaign for free expression around Eurovision, and will be meeting with the organizers on 2 May.

Amnesty International is not calling for a boycott, but the EBU needs to send a clear message to the government that they won't accept continued human rights abuses in the run-up to their celebration of free expression. That means publicly condemning the attacks and imprisonment of peaceful protesters and the arrest of critical journalists.

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