

# URGENT ACTION

## POLICE BEAT UP PEACEFUL PROTESTERS

**Police beat five youth activists during and after a peaceful protest in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, on 6 March. The protest had been sparked by reports that two prisoners of conscience had been beaten while being moved between prisons, and police dispersed them violently.**

**Jabbar Savalan** and **Dayanat Babayev** were beaten as they were arrested along with 14 other protesters and a journalist when police violently dispersed a demonstration in central Baku. The activists were taken to the 28<sup>th</sup> Yasamal District police station where another activist, **Majid Marjanli**, was beaten by officers interrogating him.

According to eyewitnesses, police used an electro-shock weapon on **Abulfaz Gurbanly**, 29, the chairman of an opposition youth group, then kicked and punched him while he was in a holding cell with other prisoners. He later said that police then moved him to another cell where they again gave him electric shocks, and continued beating him. He had tried to argue with a police officer who punched a female protestor, **Beyin Hasanli**, in the head.

The protest was organized in response to news reports in the evening of 5 March that two detainees, Babek Hasanov and Mahammad Majidli, recognized by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience, had been beaten up by prison guards while they were being moved from Prison No. 16 to Prison No. 14. The two men had been arrested and sentenced to 18 months and two and a half years in prison respectively for their involvement in a peaceful protest on 2 April 2011.

All of those detained during the protest were released after four hours, with fines and warnings.

### Please write immediately in English, Russian, Azeri, Turkish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to order an immediate investigation into the beating of peaceful protesters Jabbar Savalan, Dayanat Babayev, Majid Marjanli, Abulfaz Gurbanly and Beyin Hasanli on 6 March 2012;
- Calling on them to order an immediate investigation into reports that prisoners of conscience Babek Hasanov and Mahammad Majidli were beaten while in prison;
- Urging them to allow peaceful protest;
- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience in Azerbaijan.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 APRIL 2012 TO:

#### Yasamal District Prosecutor

Hesret Pirmammadov  
47 Tbilisi Prospect  
Baku AZ 1065, AZERBAIJAN

**Fax: +994 12 430 57 00**

#### **Email:**

**h.pirmammadov@prosecutor.gov.az**

**Salutation: Dear Prosecutor**

#### Ombudsperson

Elmira Suleymanova  
40 Uz. Hajibeyov Street  
Baku AZ1000, AZERBAIJAN

**Fax: +994 12 498 23 65 (please keep trying)**

#### **Email:**

**ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.az**

**Salutation: Dear Ombudsperson**

#### **And copies to:**

#### President

Ilham Aliyev  
Office of the President of the Azerbaijan  
Republic

19 Istiqlaliyyat Street  
Baku AZ1066, AZERBAIJAN

**Fax: +994 12 492 0625**

**Email: office@pa.gov.az**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In Azerbaijan, the authorities have effectively criminalised peaceful anti-government protest, by banning demonstrations and imprisoning those who organize and take part in them. Police use excessive force to break up peaceful, but officially unsanctioned demonstrations. Threats and intimidation against human rights defenders have been used together with legislative and administrative means to shut down and deny registration to civil society groups working on democracy and human rights.

Journalists have been beaten, ill-treated and abducted, while the range of independent media outlets has been curbed through laws banning foreign broadcasters from national airwaves.

New methods of exercising the right to freedom of expression, such as the internet and social media, are also under siege. Bloggers and youth activists have been harassed and imprisoned on trumped-up charges. The government is considering ways to control and monitor internet use.

As frustration with these increasingly tight controls grew, hundreds of people gathered in the streets in March and April 2011 demanding democratic reform and greater respect for human rights.

The authorities suppressed these early signs of popular protest with a new wave of repression and intimidation. Following the protests, 14 people were convicted of organizing or participating in the anti-government rallies. The authorities also used trumped-up charges to arrest and imprison three activists: two young members of the opposition and a human rights defender.

Two of the 17 recognised as prisoners of conscience have since been released following a campaign led by Amnesty International calling for their freedom. However, as Azerbaijan prepares to host the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest this May, 15 prisoners of conscience remain in jail, many of whom were arrested solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression in a peaceful protest in April last year.

Youth activists and civil society organisations in Azerbaijan have joined Amnesty International in calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience in the country.

Reports in the Azerbaijani press of beatings suffered by Babek Hasanov and Mahammad Majidli during their transfer from Prison No. 16 to Prison No. 14 on 5 March motivated young activists into rallying for a spontaneous protest. Around 60 activists gathered near the Academy of Sciences in the Yasamal District of Baku in the morning of 6 March to call for the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience, and an end to their ill-treatment.

■ Name and gender (m/f): Jabbar Savalan (m), Dayanat Babayev (m), Majid Marjanli (m), Abulfaz Gurbanly (m) and Beyin Hasanli (f); Babek Hasanov (m) and Mahammad Majidli (m)