

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION LEADER FIGHTING SENTENCE

Azerbaijani opposition politician and journalist Tofiq Yagublu was sentenced to four years and three months in prison on 3 September on trumped up charges. He started a hunger strike in protest and on 12 September he was transferred from a detention centre to a hospital after his health deteriorated. On 18 September, the Baku court of appeals ruled to place him under house arrest pending the appeal hearing. Tofiq Yagublu remains a prisoner of conscience and his conviction must be quashed.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

H.E. Ilham Aliyev
President of Azerbaijan

19 Istiqlaliyyat Street Baku AZ1066, Azerbaijan

Please use online form: https://en.president.az/letters/new_form

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PresidentIlhamAliyev/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/presidentaz?lang=en>

Dear President,

*I am concerned about the conviction in an unfair trial of **Tofiq Yagublu**, a prominent Azerbaijani opposition politician and journalist. Tofiq Yagublu was arrested in Baku on 22 March after a car accident in which he was involved. The next day, the Baku City Court remanded Tofiq Yagublu in custody on false charges of hooliganism. Following a politically motivated trial, he was convicted on 3 September and sentenced to four years and three months in prison.*

Tofiq Yagublu started a hunger strike on 2 September in protest against his unfounded prosecution. On 12 September he was transferred to a hospital after his health deteriorated as a result. On 18 September, the Baku court of appeals ruled to place him under house arrest, pending his appeal hearing.

Tofiq Yagublu is a prisoner of conscience imprisoned solely for exercising his human rights.

In light of the above, I urge you to take all necessary steps to ensure:

- ***Tofiq Yagublu's immediate and unconditional release;***
- ***An end to the persecution of Tofiq Yagublu and other political and civil activists, and that every person in Azerbaijan is able to fully enjoy their human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.***

Yours sincerely

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Tofig Yagublu is a journalist and a prominent member of opposition party Musavat and he has faced years of harassment for his peaceful activism.

He was first arrested in 2013 after traveling to the city of Ismayili, in northern Azerbaijan, on 23- 24 January 2013, to observe demonstrations and riots that were taking place there at the time. In March 2014, following unfair trial under politically-motivated charges, the Shaki Court of Grave Crimes found him guilty of inciting mass violence and sentenced him to five years in prison. Amnesty International recognised Tofig Yagublu prisoner of conscience.

On 5 November 2015, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that by depriving Tofig Yagublu of his liberty without having reasonable suspicion of a criminal offense, Azerbaijan violated his rights under Article 5 (right to liberty and security) of the European Convention on Human Rights (Yagublu v. Azerbaijan, application no. 31709/13). Tofig Yagublu was released in March 2016 under a presidential pardon after spending more than three years in prison.

In October 2019, he was placed in “administrative detention” for 30 days for purportedly failing to obey police orders, at a peaceful protest rally brutally dispersed by police. Tofig Yagublu alleged that he was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment while in detention, but his allegations have never been effectively investigated.

For years, Amnesty International has been documenting human rights violations in Azerbaijan. The rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly have been severely restricted and many journalists, human rights defenders and other activists have faced harassment, prosecution under false charges and imprisonment following unfair trials. According to Azerbaijani human rights defenders, currently, around 100 individuals remain in prisons or in detention following arrest under politically motivated charges. This practise has repercussions throughout civil society in Azerbaijan, creating a climate of fear and self-censorship. As the arrests and politically motivated prosecution of critics continue, Azerbaijan remains closed to human rights scrutiny. International human rights monitors, including Amnesty International, have been denied access to the country for several years.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Azeri, English, Russian.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 20 November 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Tofig Yagublu (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR55/2029/2020/en/>