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Azerbaijan fails again to ensure justice for Jabbar Savalan

Amnesty International reiterates its call for the immediate release of Jabbar Savalan after today's decision of Azerbaijan's Supreme Court to uphold the conviction of the twenty year-old political activist

"Azerbaijani courts have once again demonstrated that there is no rule of law in Azerbaijan when political interests are concerned" said John Dalhuisen, Deputy Director for Amnesty International's Europe and Central Asia Programme.

On 4 May 2011, Jabbar Savalan was jailed for two and a half years after using Facebook to call for protests against the government. He was convicted on drugs charges the organization believes to have been fabricated.

Jabbar Savalan's conviction was secured despite a blood test showing that he had not used drugs and credible allegations that the police had planted the 0.74g of marijuana they claim to have found on him at Sumgayit police station.

After today's decision of the Supreme Court to uphold Jabbar Savalan's verdict, Asabali Mustafayev, one of his lawyers told Amnesty International:

"We still had a little hope that the Supreme Court might deliver justice, but their decision was not surprising. Now we have no other choice but to submit his case to the European Court of Human Rights and we will do it as soon as possible."

Jabbar is one of 17 prisoners of conscience currently behind bars in Azerbaijan after the authorities clamped down on peaceful protests in March and April 2011. Amnesty International is using his case to focus international attention on human rights abuses in Azerbaijan during its 2011 Letter Writing Marathon.

Between 3 and 17 December this year, hundreds of thousands of people around the world will be taking action on behalf of Jabbar Savalan as part of Amnesty International's annual Letter Writing Marathon. People in over 70 countries will be writing letters, signing petitions, sending SMS messages and taking action online to demand that his rights are respected.

"Last month Azerbaijan was elected to the UN Security Council and next year will host the Eurovision song contest, watched by around 125 million people each year. As the international spotlight falls on Azerbaijan it is high time the government took its international human rights obligations seriously" said Dalhuisen.

"The authorities must immediately release Jabbar Savalan and the 16 other prisoners of conscience currently behind bars."