

URGENT ACTION

ARIF YUNUS RELEASED PENDING APPEAL HEARING

Azerbaijani prisoner of conscience Arif Yunus was released from jail on 12 November on medical grounds, pending an appeal hearing in the criminal case against him. His wife, prisoner of conscience Leyla Yunus remains in jail. Both face lengthy sentences.

The Court of Appeal in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, conditionally released **Arif Yunus** from jail on 12 November. The Court's decision was based on a medical report explaining that Arif Yunus's health has further deteriorated due to high blood pressure and he would not receive adequate medical care in jail. The Court placed Arif Yunus under a travel ban and he is not allowed to leave Baku.

Arif Yunus's wife, Azerbaijani human rights defender **Leyla Yunus** remains in jail. She is a prisoner of conscience. Her health condition is poor too, as she has been diagnosed with diabetes and hepatitis C, and has reduced vision in her left eye. Leyla Yunus has not received adequate medical care whilst in detention, and the authorities have refused to transfer her to a hospital or release her on medical grounds.

The Grave Crimes Court in Baku convicted Leyla and Arif Yunus of "fraud" and other purported crimes related to their NGO work, and sentenced them to eight-and-a-half and seven-year prison terms, respectively, on 13 August 2015. A trumped-up charge of treason is also pending against the couple, but it has been referred to another court for consideration. Unless their convictions are quashed on appeal, the couple will have to serve their lengthy prison terms.

Please write immediately in Azerbaijani, English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to drop all charges against Leyla Yunus and Arif Yunus and urging an immediate and unconditional release of Leyla Yunus, a prisoner of conscience imprisoned solely for her legitimate human rights work and criticism of the government;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that Leyla Yunus urgently receives all necessary medical treatment;
- Insisting on full respect for, and protection of, the right to freedom of expression in Azerbaijan.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 DECEMBER 2015 TO:

President

Ilham Aliyev
19 Istiqlaliyyat Street
Baku AZ1066, Azerbaijan
Fax: + 994 12 492 0625
Email: office@pa.gov.az

Salutation: Dear President Aliyev

Prosecutor General

Zakir Qaralov
7 Rafibeyli Street
Baku AZ1001, Azerbaijan
Email: info@prosecutor.gov.az

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

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. This is the seventh update of UA 182/14. Further information:
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur55/2274/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Leyla Yunus is the President of the Azerbaijani NGO, the Institute for Peace and Democracy. She was arrested on 30 July 2014 on trumped-up charges of treason (purportedly spying for Armenia), tax evasion, forgery, fraud, and illegal business in relation to a grant received by her NGO which she had been prevented by the authorities from registering. Her husband, Arif Yunus, was arrested on 5 August 2014, also on trumped-up charges. They were convicted on 13 August 2015 and sentenced to eight-and-a-half and seven-year prison terms, respectively.

Leyla Yunus and Arif Yunus both suffer from serious health problems and their health has deteriorated further since their arrests. During the court hearing on 13 August 2015 Arif Yunus lost consciousness. He suffered two strokes in April 2014. Leyla Yunus has reported being threatened, harassed and ill-treated after she asked for medical treatment in connection with her deteriorating health.

Amnesty International has longstanding concerns about the Azerbaijani authorities' failure to respect their international obligations to protect the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Dissenting voices in the country frequently face trumped-up criminal charges, physical assault, harassment, blackmail and other reprisals from the authorities and groups associated with them. Law-enforcement officials regularly use torture and other ill-treatment against detained civil society activists, with impunity.

Amnesty International has recognized at least 19 people as prisoners of conscience in Azerbaijan, jailed solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression. For more information, see "Critical human rights situation in Azerbaijan further worsening ahead of 2015 election" (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur55/2787/2015/en/>), *Azerbaijan: the Repression Games: The voices you won't hear at the first European Games* (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur55/1732/2015/en/>), *Azerbaijan: Guilty of Defending Rights: Azerbaijan's human rights defenders and activists behind bars* (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur55/1077/2015/en/>) and *Behind bars: Silencing dissent in Azerbaijan* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/004/2014/en>).

Representatives of Amnesty International, as well as several other international human rights organizations and international media, were barred from entering Azerbaijan in 2015. Amnesty International's delegation was refused entry into Azerbaijan and deported from Baku Heydar Aliyev International Airport on 7 October 2015.

Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, hosted the inaugural European Games in June 2015. The 2015 European Games was the first major multi-sport event for Europe and involved around 6,000 European athletes. Shortly before her arrest, on 25 July 2014, Leyla Yunus organized a press conference at which she called for an international boycott of the European Games because of Azerbaijan's dire human rights record.

Name: Leyla Yunus (f), Arif Yunus (m).

Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 182/14 Index: EUR 55/2888/2015 Issue Date: 17 November 2015