

AI INDEX: EUR 55/06/96
21 FEBRUARY 1996

AZERBAIJAN - AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES THE AUTHORITIES TO ENSURE
APPROPRIATE MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR IMPRISONED POLITICAL OPPONENT

The Azerbaijani authorities should ensure that Tofiq Qasimov, a possible prisoner of conscience, receives all appropriate medical treatment following his transfer from prison to hospital last week, Amnesty International said today.

“At least two prisoners in ill-health are alleged to have died as a result of inadequate medical treatment in the past year. We are concerned that Tofiq Qasimov may also suffer as a result of inadequate medical care,” the human rights organization said.

Tofiq Qasimov, under arrest since September 1995, is said to have been diagnosed in recent days as suffering from reactive psychosis, a serious mental health problem induced by environmental circumstances. On 16 February, he was transferred from an investigation prison of the Ministry of National Security to a prison hospital.

Amnesty International is seeking further information from the Azerbaijani authorities on Tofiq Qasimov's reported mental state as well as his treatment, prognosis and plans for future care. According to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, any prisoner requiring specialist medical care should be transferred to a specialist medical facility to obtain such treatment.

Tofiq Qasimov, a member of parliament and prominent political figure in Azerbaijan, has been charged with complicity in a failed coup attempt in March 1995. Amnesty International is concerned about allegations that the charges are false, and have been fabricated in order to punish Tofiq Qasimov for his non-violent political activity in opposition to the Azerbaijani Government. The organization is also concerned that he faces a possible death sentence if convicted.

In a report issued in January (*Azerbaijan - Allegations of ill-treatment in detention*, AI Index: EUR 55/01/96), Amnesty International expressed its concern at continuing allegations that detainees have been ill-treated by law enforcement officials.

ENDS\