

URGENT ACTION

YOUTH ACTIVIST CHARGED AND DETAINED

On 29 September, opposition youth activist Zaur Gurbanli was detained in Baku, Azerbaijan by authorities from Azerbaijan's Anti-Organized Crimes Unit. He was given 15 days in prison following a closed trial on the day of his arrest.

On 29 September, opposition youth activist **Zaur Gurbanli**, 25, was detained outside his apartment in Baku by plain-clothed officers from Azerbaijan's Anti-Organized Crimes Unit. During a hasty telephone call to a friend the same day, Zaur Gurbanli said the men seized him apparently without explanation, saying they were taking him to the Yasamal District police station. When his lawyer visited the station, police denied he was there.

Officers also seized Zaur Gurbanli's laptop and took Nida (a youth organisation campaigning for human rights and democracy) materials from his room. They also took a number of Nida leaflets and posters from the office of another NGO Zaur Gurbanli is involved in – Positive Change. The staff at Positive Change were forced to give their names, have their photographs taken, and to hand over their membership lists. Officers of the Anti-Organized Crimes Unit brought Zaur Gurbanli to the office without handcuffs or restraints, making their claim that he resisted arrest highly dubious.

Zaur Gurbanli was held incommunicado until 1 October, when his lawyer was granted access. He discovered that Zaur Gurbanli had been handed 15 days in prison on Article 310.1 on the administrative charge of resisting arrest. A statement released by the Ministry of Interior claimed that Zaur Gurbanli was being investigated for his possession of "illegal materials". Azerbaijani authorities frequently falsely charge opposition activists with resisting arrest while they build a case against them.

Zaur Gurbanli is the chair of Nida and was involved in the Sing for Democracy campaign that persuaded the 2012 Eurovision winner Loreen to condemn rights abuses in Azerbaijan. A regular blogger, he recently posted an article criticizing government corruption and discrimination, in which he ridiculed the inclusion of a poem by the President's daughter as mandatory reading in the country's school curriculum.

It is believed that he is being targeted because of his criticism of the government of Azerbaijan and for the peaceful expression of his ideas.

Please write immediately in Azerbaijani or your own language:

- Calling on authorities to drop all charges against Zaur Gurbanli related to his peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression as a political blogger and activist.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 NOVEMBER 2012 TO:

Chief of the Anti-Organized Crimes Unit

Mirgafar Seyidov
Anti-Organized Crimes Unit,
7 Demirchizade Street,
Baku, AZ1072, AZERBAIJAN
Fax: +994 12 590 9699

Salutation: Dear Mr. Seyidov

President

Ilham Aliyev
Office of the President of the Azerbaijan
Republic
18 Istiqlaliyyat Street,
Baku AZ1066, AZERBAIJAN
Fax: +994 12 492 0625

Email: office@pa.gov.az

Salutation: Dear President

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Zaur Gurbanli is the latest in a series of young activists and human rights defenders to be arrested following the Sing for Democracy campaign. 23-year-old Mehman Huseynov is currently being tried on bogus hooliganism charges brought in retaliation for his work as the campaign's Media Coordinator.

Criticism of the President's family frequently provokes a swift and harsh response from the authorities. In March this year two musicians were arrested and tortured after they insulted the President's late mother during a performance.

Name: Zaur Gurbanli

Gender m/f: m

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