

**PUBLIC**

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**20 April 2006**

**UA 97/06**      **Fear of forcible return/torture and ill-treatment**

**GEORGIA**      **Azer Ramizoglu Samedov (m), human rights activist**

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Human rights activist Azer Ramizoglu Samedov, an Azerbaijani citizen, was arrested in Georgia on 31 March at the request of the Azerbaijani authorities, who have asked for him to be extradited. He has been free on bail since 14 April, but could be detained and forcibly returned at any time. In Azerbaijan he would be at risk of torture and ill treatment. Georgia has ratified the Convention Against Torture, which expressly prohibits the forcible return of anyone to a country where they would be at risk of torture.

Azer Ramizoglu Samedov is the director of an NGO that promotes religious tolerance, the Caucasian Centre for the Protection of Freedom of Conscience and Religion (DEVAMM). He is also the head of a religious society, Islam-Ittikhat, which was based at the Djuma Mosque in the Azerbaijani capital, Baku. The Azerbaijani government alleged that the mosque was a centre of Islamist extremism, and closed it down in July 2004.

Azer Ramizoglu Samedov has been living in Georgia since November 2003, when he fled Azerbaijan during the crackdown that followed the presidential election the previous month. As director of DEVAMM, Samedov had been at the head of a monitoring group observing the conduct of the 15 October elections, which were widely condemned as unfair by domestic and international observers. The following day there were peaceful demonstrations in Baku, which the security forces dispersed violently, leading to public disorder: hundreds of people were injured and as many as four were killed. Samedov observed the demonstrations and the security forces' response. The authorities charged him with "participation in mass public disorder" and "resistance to the representatives of the authorities" (Articles 220 and 315 of the Azerbaijani Criminal Code for his supposed involvement in the unrest, charges which his supporters believe are groundless and politically motivated, and part of the government's broader attempt to eliminate dissidence.

The Azerbaijani Prosecutor's request for extradition is valid for one month, until late April. Samedov therefore still faces the prospect of forcible return. Amnesty International is concerned that like many others arrested in connection with the events of 2003, Samedov will not be given a fair and open trial if extradited, and worse, may face torture or ill treatment.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Amnesty International has received numerous reports of ill-treatment, torture and death in custody in Azerbaijan. Some 600 people were arrested in the aftermath of the 2003 election, which was won by the former president's son, Ilham Aliyev. The election day was followed by public disorder in central Baku, after the security forces dispersed peacefully demonstrating crowds with undue violence. Four persons were estimated to have been killed and hundreds injured. Some of those arrested were subsequently imprisoned without fair trial and some reported being tortured. Similar developments accompanied last year's parliamentary election in Azerbaijan.

The fact that the Prosecutor has issued a request to extradite Samedov appears to confirm fears that human rights defenders in Azerbaijan will face intimidation and persecution if they try to publicise electoral fraud and use of excessive force to disperse demonstrations.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Georgian, English, Russian or your own language:**

- expressing concern that the Georgian authorities are intending to extradite Azer Ramizoglu Samedov to Azerbaijan, where he would be at risk of torture;
- pointing out that this would be a violation of Georgia's obligations under the Convention Against Torture;
- calling on the Georgian authorities to halt the extradition process immediately.

**APPEALS TO:**

Mikhail Saakashvili, President, State Chancellery, 7 Ingoroqva Street, 380034 Tbilisi, Georgia.

**Fax:** +995 32 99 92 00  
**Email:** pr@president.gov.ge  
**Salutation:** Dear President Saakashvili

Ivane Merabishvili, Minister of the Interior, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

**Fax:** +995 32 98 71 46  
+995 32 99 95 24  
**Email:** presscenter@pol.ge  
**Salutation:** Dear Minister Merabishvili

Elene Tevdoradze, Head of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, Petitions and Civil Society Relations, Parliament of Georgia, 8 Rustaveli Avenue, 380018 Tbilisi, Georgia.

**Fax:** +995 32 92 15 63  
+995 32 92 33 50  
**Salutation:** Dear Mrs Tevdoradze

Zurab Adeishvili, General Prosecutor of Georgia, 24 Gorgasali Street, 380014, Tbilisi, Georgia.

**Fax:** +995 32 98 21 70  
**Salutation:** Dear Mr Adeishvili

Gia Kavtaradze, Minister of Justice, 19 Griboedov Street, Tbilisi 380008 Georgia

**Fax:** +995 32 93 02 25  
+ 995 32 75 82 22  
**Email:** justice@justice.gov.ge  
**Salutation:** Dear Minister Kavtaradze

**COPIES TO:**

Mr Sozar Subari, Ombudsman of Georgia, 11 Machabeli Street, Tbilisi 0107, Georgia

**Fax:** + 995 32 92 24 70  
**Email:** info@ombudsman.ge

and to diplomatic representatives of Georgia accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 June 2006.