

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST DETAINED AFTER CALLING FOR PROTESTS

Youth activist Bakhtiyar Hajiyev was arrested on 4 March in Azerbaijan, after using Facebook to call for protests inspired by recent events in the Middle East and North Africa. He has said that he was tortured and threatened with rape by police officers while in custody. He is on hunger strike in protest against his treatment.

Police in Ganja, in the north-west of the country, claim that **Bakhtiyar Hajiyev** failed to register with them on 4 March as he had been required to do so since a criminal case was opened against him in late January, following his arrest in November 2010 for evading military service. However, as a parliamentary candidate in the November 2010 elections, Bakhtiyar Hajiyev was exempt from military service.

Bakhtiyar Hajiyev's lawyer said that at 10am on 4 March his client registered with the police as usual. Police arrested him, however as he was on his way home from the police station, claiming that he had failed to register. He was brought back to the police station before being transferred to another holding facility from which he was taken to court the same day. The court ordered that he be remanded in custody for two months pending his trial for allegedly evading military service.

During the court hearing, Bakhtiyar Hajiyev managed to pass a letter to his lawyer. The letter said that whilst in custody, police questioned him about his facebook activity, then punched him, strangled him, twisted his arms and applied manual pressure to his face until his mouth bled. They also threatened him with rape. In protest against his treatment he began a hunger strike.

Bakhtiyar Hajiyev is one of the organizers of a Facebook campaign calling for a day of protest against the government on 11 March.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Azeri, Russian, Turkish, English or your own language:

- Calling for the Azerbaijani authorities to immediately release Bakhtiyar Hajiyev until his trial begins;
- Calling for the Azerbaijani authorities to promptly and impartially investigate the allegation that Bakhtiyar Hajiyev was tortured while in police custody;
- Calling for the Azerbaijani authorities to protect from torture and other ill-treatment while in police custody.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 APRIL 2011 TO:

President of the Republic

Ilham Aliyev
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Office of the President
19 Istiqlaiyyat St.
AZ1066 Baku,
Azerbaijan
Fax: +99412 492 35 43/ 492 06 25
Email: president@president.az
Salutation: Dear President

Ombudsperson

Prof. Elmira Suleymanova
Office of the Ombudsman
40 Uz. Hajibeyov Street
Baku AZ1000,
Azerbaijan
Fax: + 994 12 498 8574 Email:
ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.az
Salutation: Dear Ombudsperson

Minister of Justice

Fikrat Mammadov
1, Inshaatchylar prospect
Baku AZ1065
Azerbaijan
Fax: +994 12 430 09 81
Email: contact@justice.gov.az;
international@justice.gov.az
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bakhtiyar Hajiyev is a well-known youth activist, who stood as an independent parliamentary candidate in the Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan on 7 November 2010. He publicly denounced electoral violations and was detained on 18 November at the Azerbaijani-Georgia border, as he was leaving the country. He was held overnight at a military drafting centre before being released. In January 2010 he was charged with evading military service and ordered by the court to remain in Ganja and register with the police daily pending his trial.

According to the constitution, if the beliefs of citizens come into conflict with service in the army, alternative service instead of regular army service is permitted in some cases. An Alternative Service Law is one of the commitments taken by Azerbaijan before the Council of Europe, but has not yet been adopted.

The Azerbaijani authorities have used forcible drafting against government critics on previous occasions, including against editor Eynulla Fatullayev, who Amnesty International considers to be a prisoner of conscience.

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