

URGENT ACTION

DROP CHARGES AND RELEASE GUBAD IBADOGLU

On 22 April 2024, after 274 days in detention, prominent Azerbaijani economist and political activist Gubad Ibadoghlu was moved to house arrest. The decision to transfer him to house arrest was based on his deteriorating health, including diabetes and a heart condition. However, he continues to be deprived of liberty, and is not allowed to leave Azerbaijan to receive the medical care he requires.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Ilham Aliyev
President of Azerbaijan
19 Istiqlaliyyat Street
Baku AZ1066
Azerbaijan
Email: office@pa.gov.az

Dear President,

I am writing to demand immediate and unconditional release of Gubad Ibadoghlu, a prominent academic and political activist, and that all charges against him are dropped. He was detained on 23 July 2023 on fabricated charges in an apparent retaliation for his anti-corruption work and criticism of the Azerbaijani authorities. On 22 April, he was finally released from the Kurdakhani detention centre and moved to a house arrest. However, he is still deprived of liberty and continues to face the trumped-up charges of production, acquisition or sale of counterfeit money by an organized group as well as "extremism".

According to his family, Gubad Ibadoghlu's medical conditions include a heart disease, type 2 diabetes, kidney disease, severe lower back pain, and his health has seriously deteriorated in detention. According to his lawyer, the decision to move Gubad Ibadoghlu to house arrest was based on his critical health conditions. Although the house arrest is a positive development in his case, he is still unable to receive proper medical care that he requires urgently.

I urge you to take all necessary steps to ensure that all charges against Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu are dropped and that he is allowed to leave the country to access adequate healthcare abroad. Meanwhile, he should be allowed access to adequate care in Azerbaijan including allowing a foreign doctor of his choice to visit him at home. I also urge you to end the misuse of the criminal justice system in Azerbaijan to target government critics and dissidents. All politically motivated charges against human rights defenders, activists and journalists in Azerbaijan should be immediately dropped.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Gubad Ibadoghlu is a well-known Azerbaijani economist and political activist. He is the chairperson of the Azerbaijan Democracy and Prosperity Movement, established in 2014, that has been arbitrarily denied registration as a political party by the Azerbaijani authorities. He was a senior visiting scholar at the London School of Economic and led the Economic Research Centre, an NGO that conducted research on public finance management, good governance, and budget transparency. The Azerbaijani authorities arbitrarily closed the Economic Research Centre and froze its bank accounts in 2014, as part of tightening restrictions on Azerbaijan's civil society. Gubad Ibadoghlu went into political exile in 2017 but returned to Azerbaijan in 2023, to visit his family.

On 23 July 2023, police officers arrested Gubad Ibadoghlu and his wife, Irada Bayramova, while they were driving to meet youth activists from the Azerbaijan Democracy and Prosperity Movement in Sumgayit, a city about 40 kilometres from capital Baku. Four unmarked cars surrounded their vehicle and forced it to stop by ramming it from the front and the rear.

According to their child, Zhala Bayramova, 20 plain-clothed officers “forced the couple out of their car, and physically assaulted them, then forced them into separate cars and drove them to the Interior Ministry’s Organized Crime Unit in Baku”. After being released later that day, Irada Bayramova had multiple bruises to her arms, legs and back. Gubad Ibadoghlu filed a complaint about their ill-treatment, which was left unaddressed.

According to the Azerbaijani Ministry of Interior official statement made on the same day, the arrest of several people, including Gubad Ibadoghlu, is a part of an operation against supporters of Fethullah Gülen, the exiled Turkish cleric who the Turkish authorities along with his supporters, have designated as “terrorist organization.” Police allegedly seized US\$ 40,000 in cash, among other things, from the office of the Economic Research Centre. They also raided Gubad Ibadoghlu and Irada Bayramova’s home and briefly detained Ibadoghlu’s brother, Gabid Baymalov.

On 22 April 2024, after 274 days in detention, Gubad Ibadoghlu was released from the detention centre and moved to house arrest. According to his lawyer, the decision was based on Gubad Ibadoghlu's deteriorating health condition and the lack of medical examinations and care at the detention centre. According to his family, Gubad Ibadoghlu's medical conditions include heart disease, type 2 diabetes, kidney disease, severe lower back pain, and his health is quickly deteriorating. According to his family, while his blood sugar levels and general health conditions have sharply worsened, he has not had appropriate medical examinations to determine the causes and the correct treatment plan. While at the detention centre, he was not given some of the medication he was regularly taking before his arrest, while other medications were given on an irregular schedule, which increased his risk of a stroke and of developing further heart disease and other life-threatening conditions.

Gubad Ibadoghlu's unfounded prosecution is part of the Azerbaijani authorities' ongoing crackdown on human rights defenders, government critics, [independent media](#) and [all dissent](#). Criticism of the authorities is routinely met with repression, and those who dare to challenge the government face trumped up charges, unfair trials and lengthy prison sentences. Amnesty International has documented previously how [the Azerbaijani authorities sought to rid the country of all critical voices ahead of major international events Azerbaijan was hosting](#). This is a familiar pattern observed ahead of the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 29), which the country will host in November 2024 in Baku.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Azeri, English, or Russian

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 7 August 2024

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Gubad Ibadoghlu (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur55/7943/2024/en/>