

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DETAINED

Anar Mammadli, a prominent human rights defender and climate advocate, was arrested on 29 April 2024 by the Azerbaijani authorities on bogus charges amid a continuing crackdown on civil society activists. On 30 April 2024, he was placed in pre-trial detention, facing charges of conspiracy to unlawfully bring money into the country. If convicted, he faces up to eight years in prison. The charges against him are fabricated and his prosecution is an apparent retaliation for his criticism of the government and his activism.

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

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

Dear President Aliyev,

I am writing to demand the immediate and unconditional release of human rights defender **Anar Mammadli**, who is being held in the Baku Detention Center No.1 on fabricated charges of "smuggling by prior conspiracy by a group of persons" under Article 206.3.2 of the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan. If convicted, he may face up to eight years in prison.

After his arrest on 29 April 2024, law enforcement officers raided both Anar Mammadli's house and his parents' house simultaneously, seizing documents, laptops, and flash drives. Relatives believe that the authorities may have planted unidentified amounts of money.

Anar Mammadli is a prominent human rights defender, Head of the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre, and co-founder of the Climate of Justice Initiative in Azerbaijan, he is also a known critic of the Azerbaijani authorities and advocates for human rights and environmental justice ahead of COP29.

His arrest follows a pattern of the authorities misusing the criminal justice system to silence government critics, with associated violations including illegal searches, denying access to lawyers, alleged torture and other ill-treatment in detention, prosecutions, convictions, and arbitrary detentions rubber-stamped by compliant courts.

I am calling on you:

- **To ensure Anar Mammadli's immediate and unconditional release and end the misuse of the criminal justice system to target him and other critics of the government in Azerbaijan.**
- **To end sustained efforts to silence dissent and ensure the compliance of Azerbaijan with its international human rights obligations.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Anar Mammadli, a prominent human rights defender and Head of the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre. He is a co-founder of the Climate of Justice Initiative, a newly established group looking into the promotion of civic space and environmental justice within the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29), which will take place in Baku in November 2024. He was among the first activists in Azerbaijan who linked respect for human rights and climate justice, and were actively involved in international advocacy at the UN Human Rights Council and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

On 29 April 2024, Anar Mammadli was on the way to pick up his child from nursery when he was apprehended by unidentified masked men and driven away in a black vehicle. According to family members, police then searched Anar Mammadli's house and allegedly planted money. The Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed his detention and his sister reported that he is officially suspected of "smuggling by prior conspiracy by a group of persons" under Article 206.3.2 of the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan. He was reportedly denied access to his lawyer overnight when kept in a temporary detention centre in Baku. On 30 April 2024, Khatai District Court of Baku ruled to place him in pre-trial detention until the end of August 2024. Baku Appellate Court considered an appeal against the arrest of Anar Mammadli on 6 May, but the appeal wasn't granted.

In 2014 Anar Mammadli was recognized as a Prisoner of Conscience by Amnesty International when he was given a five-and-a-half-year prison sentence on trumped-up charges of tax evasion, illegal entrepreneurship, and abuse of office. While in prison he received the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) for his outstanding contributions to civil society in defending human rights.

The European Court of Human Rights stated that his arrest in 2013 was a violation of articles 5 and 1 (right to liberty and security); 5 and 4 (right to have lawfulness of detention decided speedily by a court); 18 (limitation on use of restrictions on rights). The Azerbaijani authorities failed to comply with the judgment.

He was pardoned in 2016 but has since faced repeated attacks from the authorities and the pro-government media, intensifying in the lead-up to COP29.

The current detention of Anar Mammadli follows a pattern of abuse of the criminal justice system aimed at silencing government critics including human rights defenders and journalists in Azerbaijan. Since last November, at least 11 journalists were also arrested on similar accusations of money smuggling. This includes Imran Aliyev, journalist and founder of parliamentary watchdog website Meclis.info; six journalists from investigative news outlet AbzasMedia: its director Ulvi Hasanli, his deputy Mahammad Kekelov; editor-in-chief Sevinj Vagifgyzy, staff journalists Elnara Gasimova, Nargiz Absalamova and investigative journalist Hafiz Babali as well as Aziz Orujov and Shamo Eminov from online news channel Kanal 13, the founder of independent news outlet Toplum TV Alasgar Mammadli and its journalist Mushfig Jabbar.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Azeri, English, Russian

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 10 July 2024

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Anar Mammadli (he/him)