

URGENT ACTION

YOUTH ACTIVISTS BEATEN, RISK POLICE TORTURE

Three youth activists have been beaten in police custody, and are at risk of torture. They were arrested while performing at a peaceful protest in the capital, Baku, after one of them swore about the President's family. They are now detained incommunicado.

Several youth organizations held a rally on 17 March, calling for an end to corruption in state education and the release of political prisoners in Azerbaijan. Officials had given permission for the rally, on condition that it was held on the outskirts of Baku, but despite this around 1500 young people turned up.

During a performance by singer **Jamal Ali** and his band that contained a swearword, one of the demonstrators got up on the stage and asked him who he was swearing at. Before he resumed his performance, Jamal asked the crowd "What's wrong with swearing? Fuck Ilham's mother, does anyone have a problem with that?" At this point one of the organizers, **Etibar Salmanli**, approached Jamal Ali and asked him to stop, before plainclothes and uniformed police officers descended on the two men and band member **Natig Kamilov**.

Eyewitnesses said that police beat Jamal Ali and Natig Kamilov "savagely" before taking the three to a police station, where police refused to allow to their lawyer, Anar Gasimli, or their families, to see them; manhandling Anar Gasimli out of the station. Anticipating that they would be taken to the local court, Anar Gasimli waited there and told Amnesty International that he saw his clients brought in with visible signs of beating. The three, who are all in their mid-20's, were charged with "petty hooliganism" and ordered to spend between five and 10 days in administrative detention. During the hearing, both Jamal and Natig said they had been beaten while in the police station as well as during their arrest.

Ordinarily people given administrative detention are moved to a corrective detention facility, but the three activists are still being detained incommunicado by the police custody, prompting fears that they are being tortured.

Please write immediately in English, Azeri, Russian or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to allow Jamal Ali, Etibar Salmanli and Natig Kamilov immediate access to their lawyer and family visits;
- Calling on them to ensure that the police immediately stop ill-treating the activists;
- Urging them to order an immediate investigation into the police assault on the activists.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 MAY 2012 TO:

Prosecutor General

Zakir Qaralov
7 Rafibeyli Street
Baku 370001. AZERBAIJAN

Fax: + 994 12 492 32 30

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Ombudsperson

Elmira Suleymanova
40 Uz. Hajibeyov Street
Baku AZ1000, AZERBAIJAN

Fax: +994 12 498 23 65 (please keep trying)

Email:

ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.az

Salutation: Dear Ombudsperson

And copies to:

President

Ilham Aliyev
Office of the President of the Azerbaijan
Republic

19 Istiqlaliyyat Street
Baku AZ1066, AZERBAIJAN

Fax: +994 12 492 0625

Email: office@pa.gov.az

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

In Azerbaijan, the authorities have effectively criminalised peaceful anti-government protest, by banning demonstrations and imprisoning those who organize and take part in them. Police use excessive force to break up peaceful, but officially unsanctioned demonstrations. They have used threats and intimidation against human rights defenders, together with legislative and administrative means to shut down and deny registration to civil society groups working on democracy and human rights.

Journalists have been beaten up and abducted, while the range of independent media outlets has been curbed through laws banning foreign broadcasters from national airwaves.

New methods of exercising the right to freedom of expression, such as the internet and social media, are also under siege. Bloggers and youth activists have been harassed and imprisoned on trumped-up charges. The government is considering ways to control and monitor internet use.

As frustration with these increasingly tight controls grew, hundreds of people gathered in the streets in March and April 2011 demanding democratic reform and greater respect for human rights.

The authorities suppressed these early signs of popular protest with a new wave of repression and intimidation. Following the protests, 14 people were convicted of organizing or participating in the anti-government rallies. The authorities also used trumped-up charges to arrest and imprison three men: two young members of the opposition and a human rights defender.

Three of the 17 recognised as prisoners of conscience have since been released following a campaign led by Amnesty International. However, as Azerbaijan prepares to host the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest in May, 15 prisoners of conscience remain in jail, many of whom were arrested solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression in a peaceful protest in April 2011.

Youth activists and civil society organisations in Azerbaijan have joined Amnesty International in calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience in the country.

Reports in the Azerbaijani press of beatings suffered by Babek Hasanov and Mahammad Majidli during their transfer from Prison No. 16 to Prison No. 14 on 5 March motivated young activists into rallying for a spontaneous protest. Around 60 activists gathered near the Academy of Sciences in the Yasamal District of Baku in the morning of 6 March to call for the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience, and an end to their ill-treatment.

Name: Jamal Ali, Etibar Salmanli, Natig Kamilov
Gender m/f: m.