

AI Index: PRE 01/472/2012
05 October 2012

Why Rihanna and Shakira should think twice before performing in Azerbaijan

Top selling artists Rihanna and Shakira should bear in mind the human rights abuses being inflicted on the people of Azerbaijan before they perform in the country's capital, Amnesty International and Sing for Democracy warned in a letter ahead of the concerts.

The two singers are appearing in Baku during the current FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup 2012.

In a joint letter, the two organizations draw attention to the current state of human rights and freedom of expression in Azerbaijan.

It also informs Rihanna and Shakira about the unsolved killing of reporter Elmar Huseynov - murdered in 2005 – and the multiple arrests and persecution of journalists, bloggers and political activists.

The letter – signed by John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International's Europe and Central Asia Programme Director and Sing for Democracy coordinator Rasul Jafaro - highlights the ban on anti-government protests in the center of Baku.

“Both singers should be aware of the situation in the country post-Eurovision.”

“This includes the spurious criminal case against photo-journalist Mehman Huseynov on trumped up hooliganism charges.”

Huseynov had actively been involved in human rights campaign conducted ahead of the Eurovision 2012 Song Contest. If convicted Mehman he faces five years in jail.

In a separate case, a singer arrested at a peaceful protest by young people on March 2012, had to leave the country because of ongoing harassment.

“Amnesty International believes that the Azerbaijani government should afford all artists, journalists, activists and ordinary citizens the right to express themselves freely without fear of reprisal. We hope that you share our belief,” concludes the letter.