

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

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Closure of NGO branch

Azerbaijan

March 15, 2011

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **Azerbaijan**.

Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the closure of the Human Rights House Azerbaijan, partner of the international Human Rights House Network, following an order of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan issued on March 10, 2011. The Human Rights House Azerbaijan had neither received prior warnings nor any complaints about the regular and timely characters of its activity reports to the authorities.

According to the Ministry of Justice, the Human Rights House Azerbaijan will be allowed to carry out activities in the future only upon prior agreement with the State. A ministry official reportedly asserted that the organisation was indeed in breach of June 2009 amendments to the "Law on Non-governmental Organizations", which require all international groups or their local affiliates in Azerbaijan to sign separate agreements with the government in order to be allowed to operate¹.

The Human Rights House Azerbaijan was registered in 2007 as a branch of the Human Rights House Foundation, and officially opened on April 25, 2009.

The Observatory is deeply concerned about this order, which hinders the right to freedom of association in the country, thus contravening article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ratified by Azerbaijan as well as article 5 of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted on December 9, 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly.

Actions requested:

Please write to the authorities in Azerbaijan, urging them to:

- i. Repeal the order of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan issued on March 10, 2011;
- ii. Put an end to all acts of harassment against human rights NGOs and human rights defenders in Azerbaijan;
- iii. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of all human rights defenders in Azerbaijan;
- iv. Conform with the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in particular its article 22;
- v. Conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, especially:

¹ See Observatory 2010 Annual Report.

- its Article 1, which states that «everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels»,

- its Article 5(c), which states that Article 5 (b) which provides that “for the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels to form, join and participate in non-governmental organizations, associations or groups”,

- its Article 12.2, which provides that the “State shall «take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of his or her rights”;

- vi. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Azerbaijan.

Addresses:

- Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Office of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 19 Istiqlaliyyat St., Baku AZ1066, Azerbaijan, Fax: +994 12 492 06 25, +994 412 92 28 68, E-mail: office@apparat.gov.az, president@gov.az, root@lider.baku.az
- Prosecutor's Office, 7 Nigar Rafibeyli St., Baku, Azerbaijan, Fax: +994 12 492 06 82, +994 12 492 26 63, E-mail: prosec@azeri.com
- Minister of Internal Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic, Fax: + 994 12 492 45 90
- Minister of Justice in Azerbaijan, Prospekt Stroitelej, 1 Baku, Azerbaijan, e-mail: contact@justice.gov.az, Tel (99412) 430 01 16, Fax + 99412 430 09 81
- Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations in Geneva, Route des Fayards 237, CH-1290 Versoix, Switzerland, E-mail: geneva@mission.mfa.gov.az, Fax: +4122 901 18 44
- Azerbaijani Embassy in Brussels, Avenue Moliere, 464, 1050 Brussels, Belgium, Tel: +32 2 345 26 60, Fax: +32 2 345 91 85

Please also write to the diplomatic missions or embassies of Azerbaijan in your respective country as well as to the EU diplomatic missions or embassies in Azerbaijan.

Paris-Geneva, March 15, 2011

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory, a FIDH and OMCT venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

- E-mail: Appeals@fidh-omct.org
- Tel and fax FIDH + 33 (0) 1 43 55 20 11 / +33 1 43 55 18 80
- Tel and fax OMCT + 41 (0) 22 809 49 39 / + 41 22 809 49 29