



Dr Michael Vesper
Director General
German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB)
Otto-Fleck-Schneise 12
60528 Frankfurt am Main
Germany

21 May 2015

Dear Mr Vesper,

We are writing to you as members of the Sport for Rights campaign, a coalition of international organisations working to draw attention to the human rights situation in Azerbaijan in the context of next month's European Games. As you know, the Azerbaijani authorities have been carrying out an unprecedented human rights crackdown, working aggressively to silence all forms of criticism and dissent.

We wanted to thank you for your comments on several occasions in recent months, expressing concern regarding restrictions on press freedom and repressive measures taken against journalists in Azerbaijan. We have also appreciated your willingness to engage with the human rights community on these issues, and your commitment to raising these concerns in your meetings with Azerbaijani officials.

Your comments have come at a critical time, when too many officials connected to the European Games are all too willing to turn a blind eye towards human rights abuses in Azerbaijan, and in some cases, actively help the Azerbaijani government's attempt to whitewash its image. We have been using your remarks as a positive example, encouraging representatives from other National Olympic Committees across Europe to publicly support human rights in Azerbaijan.

We are writing to you now with an additional request. As you may know, the crackdown has resulted in the arrests of dozens of political prisoners, including eight journalists and human rights defenders. They have been targeted for their work defending the rights of others, and telling the truth about the situation in their country. We urge you to take the opportunity now, in the last few weeks before the Games, to publicly call for the release of these individuals. We have provided a list as an appendix.

Thank you once again for your attention to the critical human rights situation in Azerbaijan and your support for our jailed colleagues.

Sincerely yours,

Mike Harris, Director, 89up

Thomas Hughes, Executive Director, ARTICLE 19

Nina Ognianova, Project Coordinator, Europe and Central Asia, Committee to Protect Journalists

Dauta Przywara, Chair of the Board, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

Kaja Haldorsen, Communications Manager, Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)

Jodie Ginsberg, Chief Executive, Index on Censorship

Karim Lahidji, President, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Jesper Højberg, Executive Director, International Media Support

Simon Papuashvili, Project Coordinator, International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)

Petra Havlikova, Project Coordinator of the Women's Rights Are Human Rights Program, NESEHNUTI

Bjørn Engesland, Secretary General, Norwegian Helsinki Committee

Emma Hughes, Strategy Director, Platform

Joanna Furmaga, Chair of the Board, Polish Green Network

Yulia Slutskaia, Director, Solidarity with Belarus Information Office

Gerald Staberock, Secretary General, World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

APPENDIX: LIST OF JAILED JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Jailed journalists:

1. **Nijat Aliyev** – editor-in-chief of the website azadxeber.az, serving a 10-year prison sentence on spurious charges of drug possession and the illegal import and sale of religious literature.
2. **Araz Guliyev** – editor of the website xeber44.com, serving an eight-year prison sentence on spurious charges of illegal possession of weapons, inciting hatred, and offensive action against the flag or emblem of Azerbaijan.
3. **Parviz Hashimli** – *Bizim Yol* newspaper reporter and editor of the moderator.az website, serving an eight-year prison sentence on spurious charges of organising the sale of weapons from Iran.
4. **Seymur Hezi** – *Azadliq* newspaper reporter and presenter of the Azerbaijan Hour satellite television programme, serving a five-year prison sentence on spurious hooliganism charges.
5. **Khadija Ismayilova** – Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist detained on spurious charges of embezzlement, illegal entrepreneurship, tax evasion, abuse of power, and inciting someone to attempt suicide.
6. **Hilal Mammadov** – editor-in-chief of *Tolishi Sedo* newspaper, serving a five-year prison sentence on spurious charges of drug possession, treason, and inciting hatred.
7. **Rauf Mirkadirov** – *Zerkalo* newspaper columnist, detained on spurious treason charges, awaiting trial.
8. **Tofiq Yagublu** – *Yenu Musavat* newspaper columnist, serving a five-year prison sentence on spurious charges of organising mass riots and using violence against police officers.

Jailed (and effectively jailed) human rights defenders:

1. **Intigam Aliyev** – human rights lawyer and Chairman of the Legal Education Society, serving a 7.5-year prison sentence on spurious charges of tax evasion, illegal entrepreneurship, and abuse of power.
2. **Emin Huseynov** – Director of the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, trapped at the Swiss Embassy in Baku, facing arrest on spurious charges of tax evasion, illegal entrepreneurship, and abuse of power.
3. **Rasul Jafarov** – Chairman of the Human Rights Club, serving a 6.5-year prison sentence on spurious charges of tax evasion, illegal entrepreneurship, and abuse of power.
4. **Anar Mammadli** – Chairman of the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre, serving a 5.5-year prison sentence on spurious charges of tax evasion, illegal entrepreneurship, and abuse of power.
5. **Arif Yunus** – historian and academic, detained on spurious charges of treason and fraud, awaiting trial.
6. **Leyla Yunus** – Director of the Institute for Peace and Democracy, detained on spurious charges of treason, fraud, forgery, tax evasion, and illegal entrepreneurship, awaiting trial.