

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

AZERBAIJAN: Intigam Aliyev sentenced to 7.5 years of jail for human rights work

Paris-Geneva, April 22, 2015 – 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), strongly condemns the seven and a half year jail sentence handed down today by the Baku Grave Crimes Court against Intigam Aliyev. The conviction of the human rights defender, arbitrarily detained since August 2014, should be overturned and he should be immediately and unconditionally released.

On April 22, 2015, the Baku Grave Crimes Court sentenced **Intigam Aliyev** to seven and a half year imprisonment on trumped-up charges of “tax evasion, “abuse of authority”, “illegal entrepreneurship”, and “appropriation”. Head of the Legal Education Society and human rights lawyer, Mr. Aliyev has represented over 100 victims before the European Court of Human Rights. This verdict comes a week after human rights defender, **Rasul Jafarov**, was sentenced to six and a half years in jail, on April 16, 2015¹.

“Yet another shameful sentence against a prominent human rights lawyer in Azerbaijan”, - declared FIDH President, Karim Lahidji.

Since the beginning of his detention, Mr. Aliyev's health has severely deteriorated. Members of his family who visited him on November 7, 2014, have reported that after two hours, he was neither able to talk nor to stand up. He suffers from violent headaches, loss of appetite and insomnia. A medical exam ran at the end of October, revealed that he was suffering from cervical oosteocondrosis and of intervertebral disc disorders – which require hospitalisation.

An Observatory delegation visited Baku in January 2015 to meet with civil society actors in order to first-hand witness the impact of the Azeri government crackdown on independent voices. The delegation also tried to visit jailed human rights defenders, including Intigam Aliyev. Despite having submitted several official requests, access to the prisons was impossible. Following this mission, the Observatory released a [report](#) on April 21, documenting the repression against human rights defenders in Azerbaijan and denouncing its intensification ahead of the European Games of Baku, to be held in June 2015.

“Less than three months before the European Games start in Baku, it is time for the authorities in Azerbaijan to immediately release Intigam Aliyev and all the other arbitrarily detained defenders, including: Rasul Jafarov, Leyla Yunus, Arif Yunusov, Khadija Ismayilova, Anar Mammadli, Hilal Mammadov and Rauf Mirqadirov, as well as to put an end to any kind of harassment against all human rights defenders in the country” concluded OMCT Secretary General, Gerald Staberock.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (OBS) was created in 1997 by FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders.

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¹ See the Observatory's Press Release, April 16, 2015.