

# URGENT ACTION

## LEYLA YUNUS BEATEN IN DETENTION

**Azerbaijani human rights defender Leyla Yunus was beaten in the Kurdakhany detention facility by the administration staff on 23 September. Conditions in her cell remain dire, which aggravates her already weakened health.**

Leyla Yunus's lawyers told Azerbaijani media that on 23 September a detention center warden twisted Leyla Yunus's hands and forced her to leave her cell for the next empty room where she was thrown on the floor and the warden began pulling her hair. He yelled at Leyla Yunus: "Well, you do not want to grow wiser?" after which, the warden started hitting her in the kidneys.

Leyla Yunus, who is 60 years old, has diabetes and medical problems related to her kidneys. As a result, she requires appropriate medication, as well as a specialized diet, which she has not always received in detention. This beating came after she complained repeatedly about being mistreated and the conditions being made worse in the detention facility.

Leyla Yunus's lawyers also said that in last few days there was no hot water in Leyla Yunus's cell, and she had to take cold showers. As a result, she caught a severe cold, and had a high fever. In spite of this, she had not been provided with any medical care.

The lawyers tried unsuccessfully to contact Leyla Yunus for two days. They were eventually permitted to see her on 24 September.

Leyla Yunus was arrested on 30 July on trumped-up charges of treason and other crimes. Her husband, **Arif Yunus**, was under travel restrictions until he was arrested on 5 August, on similar charges.

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

- Calling on the authorities to release Leyla and Arif Yunus immediately and unconditionally;
- Pending this, they should provide Leyla Yunus without any delay with the medical attention she requires;
- Calling on them to ensure Leyla Yunus's safety and freedom from threats, harassment and persecution, and to immediately investigate the allegations of beatings.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 NOVEMBER TO:**

#### **President**

Ilham Aliyev  
Office of the President of Azerbaijan  
19 Istiqlaliyyat Street  
Baku AZ1066, Azerbaijan  
Fax: 011 994 12 492 0625  
Email: [office@pa.gov.az](mailto:office@pa.gov.az)  
Salutation: Dear President Aliyev

#### **Prosecutor General**

Zakir Qaralov  
Office of the Prosecutor General  
7 Rafibeyli Street  
Baku AZ1001, Azerbaijan  
Email: [info@prosecutor.gov.az](mailto:info@prosecutor.gov.az)  
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

#### **And copies to:**

**Kurdakhany Detention Facility**  
**authorities**  
Kurdakhany Detention Facility  
Sabuncu Rayon, AZ1059  
Azerbaijan

### **Also send copies to:**

Ambassador H.E. Elin Suleymanov, Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
2741 34th Street NW, Washington DC 20008  
Tel: 1 202 337 3500 Fax: 1 202 337 5911 | Email: [azerbaijan@azembassy.us](mailto:azerbaijan@azembassy.us)

Please let us know if you took action so that we can track our impact. Send a short email to [uan@aiusa.org](mailto:uan@aiusa.org) with "UA 182/14" in the subject line and include in the body of the email the number of letters and/or emails you sent. Thank you for taking action! Please check with the AIUSA Urgent Action Network Office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 182/14. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/012/2014/en>.

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Leyla Yunus is the President of the Azerbaijani NGO - the Institute for Peace and Democracy. She was arrested on 30 July 2014 on the charges of treason (purportedly spying for Armenia), tax evasion, forgery, fraud, and illegal business in relation to a grant received by her NGO which she had been prevented by the authorities from registering. Her husband, Arif Yunus, had been placed under travel restrictions until he too was arrested on 5 August. Arif Yunus is also facing criminal charges of treason, tax evasion and fraud in connection with his involvement in the activities of the Institute for Peace and Democracy.

On 23 September, Leyla Yunus was nominated for the prestigious Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.

Amnesty International has longstanding concerns about the Azerbaijani authorities' failure to respect their international obligations to protect the rights to freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Dissenting voices in the country frequently face trumped-up criminal charges, physical assault, harassment, blackmail and other reprisals from the authorities and groups associated with them. Law-enforcement officials regularly use torture and other ill-treatment against detained civil society activists, with impunity.

Amnesty International has recognized 23 people as prisoners of conscience in Azerbaijan, jailed solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression. For more information, see *Behind bars: Silencing dissent in Azerbaijan* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/004/2014/en>); *Azerbaijan: Another prominent human rights defender thrown behind the bars* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/010/2014/en>); UA 200/14 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/011/2014/en>); and UA 186/14 and updates (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR55/013/2014/en>).

Azerbaijan currently chairs the Committee of Ministers, the main decision-making body of the Council of Europe, an organization considered the guardian of human rights in Europe.

Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, will host the inaugural European Games in June 2015. The 2015 European Games will be the first major multi-sport event for Europe and will involve around 6,000 European athletes. Shortly before her arrest, on 25 July, Leyla Yunus organized a press conference at which she called for an international boycott of the European Games because of Azerbaijan's dire human rights record.

**Names:** Leyla Yunus (f), Arif Yunus (m)

**Issues:** Human rights defenders, Health concern, Ill-treatment

**Further information on UA:** 182/14 (18 July 2014) and updates (31 July 2014) and (12 August 2014)

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