



H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev,
President of the Republic of
Azerbaijan
Office of the President of the
Republic of Azerbaijan
19 Istiglaliyyat St., Baku
AZ1066, Azerbaijan
Fax: (+994) 12 492 06 25;
(+994) 412 92 28 68

DEMAND ACTION NOW: DISMISS WRONGFUL CHARGES AGAINST WRITER AKRAM AYLISLI – AZERBAIJAN

DEAR PRESIDENT ALIYEV,

Akram Aylisli was a popular writer in Azerbaijan up until the publication of his novel *Stone Dreams*, which tackled the issue of Azeri-Armenian relations and included depictions of pogroms allegedly carried out by Azeris against Armenians in 1990.

The publication of *Stone Dreams* in 2013, set off a firestorm in the country. President Ilham Aliyev himself signed the decree stripping Aylisli of his national awards and monthly literary stipend. His books were also burned; his wife and son were both dismissed from their jobs.

At the same time, members of the Azeri parliament discussed whether Aylisli should be expelled from Azerbaijan and his citizenship repealed. He is currently facing up to three years in prison on trumped-up charges and for over 2.5 years he has awaited a trial, despite being in poor health and in need of medical care.

We urge you to recognize the legitimacy of Mr. Aylisli's work and order to lift the totally arbitrary travel ban on him. Mr. Aylisli must receive immediate medical attention. We expect you to take the necessary steps to safeguard his well-being.

In solidarity with the writer, we sign this petition urging the Azerbaijani authorities to dismiss wrongful charges against him now.

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DEMAND ACTION NOW: WEI ZHILI & KE CHENGBING – CHINA

DEAR DIRECTOR SONG,

I am writing to express my concern about the ongoing incommunicado detention of Wei Zhili and Ke Chengbing who were first taken away from their homes by police on 20 March 2019. Prior to their detention, the activists used the online platform “New Generation” (xinshengdai) to publish information about cases of migrant workers from Hunan Province who had contracted occupational lung disease, while also helping them to defend their rights and lodge labor rights complaints to the authorities.

On 26 and 27 March, Shenzhen City Ping Shan Public Security Sub-bureau informed the families that Wei and Ke were criminally detained on suspicion of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” in Shenzhen City No. 2 detention center. Three weeks later however, the police notified the family that they had been transferred to residential surveillance at a designated location.

Family members of the two activists have also been facing pressure from the police to dismiss their lawyers and remain silent about their cases. Wei Zhili’s wife, Zheng Churan, is a well-known feminist activist who has relentlessly campaigned for Wei’s release. Facing continued harassment, Zheng’s WeChat accounts have been deleted and she has been evicted by her landlord. Denied access to legal counsel of their choice, their families or others, Wei Zhili and Ke Chengbing are at serious risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Therefore, we call on you to immediately and unconditionally release Wei Zhili and Ke Chengbing unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that they have committed an internationally recognized offense and are granted a fair trial in line with international standards; ensure that Wei Zhili and Ke Chengbing are not subjected to any torture or other ill-treatment and have regular and unrestricted access to a lawyer of their choice and are able to communicate with family members, without interference unless justified in line with international human rights law; and end all harassment against family members of Wei Zhili and Ke Chengbing.

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DEMAND ACTION NOW: HANKEZI ZIKELI – CHINA

Hankezi Zikeli, 64, is reported to have suffered a nervous breakdown after having been detained in a “transformation through education” center in Urumqi since February 2018. She is an aunt of Gulchehra Hoja, a Washington-based Radio Free Asia Uyghur Service journalist, and one of her 25 relatives who have been detained for more than one year.

According to a relative in Xinjiang, who was given information by a local police officer, Hankezi Zikeli has not spoken for several months and spends her day staring at the ceiling.

Gulchehra Hoja learned in early 2018 that her relatives had all been detained in “transformation through education” centers in Urumqi and Yili in Xinjiang after being linked to a WeChat group with her. In addition to this distressing news about her aunt, Gulchehra Hoja has had no updates about the situation of her brother Kaiser Keyum and other relatives.

We are extremely worried about Hankezi Zikeli and Gulchehra Hoja’s other relatives’ safety in the facilities as they do not have access to a lawyer of their own choice or their family members, and thus they are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

- Immediately and unconditionally release Hankezi Zikeli, along with all Gulchehra Hoja’s other relatives, unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that they have committed an internationally recognized offence and are granted a fair trial in line with international standards;
- Ensure that Hankezi Zikeli and Gulchehra Hoja’s other relatives are not subjected to any torture or other ill-treatment and have regular and unrestricted access to a lawyer of their choice and are able to communicate with family members and others, including with family members living in other countries, without interference unless justified in line with international human rights law.

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DEMAND ACTION NOW: SANAZ ALAHYARI AND AMIRHOSSEIN MOHAMMADIFAR – IRAN

DEAR MR. ALGHASI MEHR,

Iranian journalists Sanaz Alahyari and Amirhossein Mohammadifar have been detained in Tehran’s Evin prison since January 2019, along with journalist Amir Amirgholi, solely in connection with their reporting on the protests of workers at Haft Tappeh sugar cane company in Khuzestan province over grievances concerning unpaid wages. Further, they have been on hunger strike since 4 July 2019 in protest at their continued detention. Prison doctors said that, given her already poor health in prison, Sanaz Alahyari could become at risk of respiratory arrest, which can lead to brain injury and death.

Sanaz Alahyari has been suffering from recurrent stomach pains, weight loss and severe shaking in her hands and legs for the past two months. Her family has repeatedly urged the authorities to transfer her to a medical center outside of prison for diagnostic tests and wrote letters in this regard to you and to the prosecutor general of Iran, Mohammad Jafar Montazeri. However, their pleas went unanswered. On 8 July, she was transferred to the prison clinic after her health deteriorated. There, doctors wanted to provide her with intravenous fluids, but she refused.

Amirhossein Mohammadifar was beaten by several prisoners convicted of violent crimes on 14 July. This reinforces long-standing concerns about the risks posed to the safety of prisoners of conscience when they are detained with those convicted of violent crimes. Under the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, authorities are obliged to keep prisoners who are violent or threatening away from other prisoners and divide prisoners into different classes based on their criminal record.

We urge you to release Sanaz Alahyari, Amirhossein Mohammadifar and Amir Amirgholi immediately and unconditionally as they are PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE, detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression. Pending their release, please ensure that Sanaz Alahyari and Amirhossein Mohammadifar receive all necessary medical care.

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Aryeh Makhlof Deri
Minister of Interior
Affairs
2 Kaplan Street
PO Box 6158
Kiryat Ben-Gurion
Jerusalem, 91061, Israel

DEMAND ACTION NOW: RELEASE MUSTAFA AL-KHAROUF – EAST JERUSALEM

DEAR MINISTER ARYEH DERI,

During the night of July 21-22, 2019, the Israeli immigration authorities, which report to your office, took Mustafa al-Kharouf from Givon prison in Ramle and attempted to forcibly deport him to Jordan. Deportation of protected persons from occupied territory is prohibited by Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and constitutes a war crime.

Jordanian authorities refused his deportation that night as he does not hold legal status to live in Jordan - twice - at two separate crossing points. Mustafa al-Kharouf is now back in arbitrary detention in Israel.

Mustafa al-Kharouf has been arbitrarily detained at Givon prison since January 22, 2019, pending his deportation. His arrest came after the Israeli Ministry of Interior Affairs denied his request for family unification and ordered his immediate deportation to Jordan. Amnesty International fears that Mustafa al-Kharouf's arbitrary detention is intended to stop him from carrying out his journalistic work.

We the undersigned, CALL ON YOU TO:

IMMEDIATELY release Mustafa al-Kharouf from Givon prison, and, in line with Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, ensure that he can remain safely in his home by granting him permanent residency status in East Jerusalem. Families belong together.

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President Andrés Manuel
López Obrador
Residencia Oficial de Los
Pinos, Molino del Rey s/n,
Col. Chapultepec, Distrito
Federal. C.P. 11850
Mexico

DEMAND ACTION NOW: JOURNALISTS – MEXICO

DEAR ANDRÉS MANUEL LÓPEZ OBRADOR,

Mexico continues to be one of the most dangerous countries for journalists. According to Mexico’s National Commission of Human Rights Committee, between 2000 and 2019, 151 journalists have been killed and at least 25 have disappeared. In 2019 the killing of journalists continues unabated. Ten journalists have been killed to date, including Edgar Alberto Nava López and Jorge Celestino Ruiz Vázquez, journalists from the states of Guerrero and Veracruz respectively. Both were killed less than 24 hours apart on August 2nd.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has denounced the murder of journalists and media workers in 2019 including Francisco Romero Díaz, Norma Sarabia Garduza, and Rafael Murúa Manríquez. CPJ indicates that evidence has confirmed that these three journalists were killed in direct relation to their work as journalists. No other countries have seen more journalists killed this year. Further, Reporters Without Borders ranks Mexico 144th in the World Press Freedom Index. When journalists in Mexico are threatened they are forced to hide, exile or move with their families after publishing a note, a report, or an investigation. The impact of widespread governmental corruption, pervasive organized crime, and the culture of impunity is contributing to the ongoing murder of journalists.

Though progress has been made in some cases, Amnesty International reports that in most cases authorities have made no significant advances into the investigations of these killings. Further, following the arrest of a suspect in the 2017 murder of journalist Javier Valdez Cárdenas, a representative for CPJ welcomed the arrest but noted that “too often, investigations into the murders of Mexican journalists stall after low-level suspects have been arrested, which allows impunity to thrive.”

We call upon the Mexican government to end impunity and ensure accountability for crimes against journalists including the cases of murder enumerated above. Further, we ask that you investigate all threats against journalists as such threats often precede murders, violence, and other forms of intimidation.

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Secretary of Justice Menardo I. Guevarra
DOJ Building, Padre Faura Street
Ermita, Manila, 1000,
Philippines

DEMAND ACTION NOW: DROP THE CHARGES AGAINST MARIA RESSA – PHILIPPINES

DEAR SECRETARY GUEVARRA,

We are writing to express our dismay at the continuing persecution of Maria Ressa, executive editor of news outlet Rappler, over allegations of cyber libel as well as violations of the Philippine’s Anti-Dummy Law. She was arrested twice in February and March, on what appear to be politically-motivated charges. Tax-related charges were also brought against Maria Ressa and her company, Rappler Holdings Corp., in December 2018. All these charges remain pending in court.

Rappler has consistently drawn attention to the deadly reality of the ‘war on drugs,’ and the thousands of unlawful killings of poor and marginalized people perpetrated in its name. Its persistence in documenting these abuses has attracted the wrath of the Philippine authorities. Maria Ressa currently faces eight active court cases initiated since January 2018, after the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission tried to shut Rappler down. Rappler, its directors, and staff are facing 11 active court cases in total. We urge your office to act swiftly to uphold and protect the freedom of the press.

Specifically, we urge you to drop the above charges against Maria Ressa and Rappler, which appear to be solely motivated by political interests; end the harassment of the media, journalists, and critics of the Duterte administration, and take measures to guarantee their right to freedom of expression and assembly. Thank you for your kind attention.

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His Majesty King Salman
bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
The Custodian of the two
Holy Mosques
Office of His Majesty the
King
Royal Court, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

DEMAND ACTION NOW: DROP CHARGES AGAINST SAUDI ARABIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS – SAUDI ARABIA

YOUR MAJESTY KING SALMAN BIN ABDUL AZIZ AL SAUD,

Loujain al-Hathloul is one of 11 Saudi Arabian women human rights defenders who have been arbitrarily detained since May 2018 following a sweeping wave of arrests. Many of the women activists brought to trial have campaigned against the long-standing ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia, and for the end of the male guardianship system. On March 13, 2019, several of the women activists were charged with contacting international organizations, including Amnesty International, journalists and other activists.

Up until the first trial session on March 13th, the women activists remained in detention without charge. They were detained incommunicado with no access to their families or lawyers during the first three months of their detention. Several women were subjected to sexual violence and other forms of torture and ill-treatment. Following international outcry, at least seven activists have been released, which we welcome.

We urge you now to drop all charges against the 11 activists, and to release immediately and unconditionally all those who are still detained, as they are prisoners of conscience, solely detained for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, assembly, and association. We also urge you to allow all those detained to access their lawyers, and to allow independent monitors into the prisons to investigate allegations of torture and other ill-treatment including sexual abuse.

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Minister of Justice
Mr. Abdülhamit Gül
Adalet Bakanlığı
06659 Ankara, Turkey

DEMAND ACTION NOW: AHMET ALTAN – TURKEY

DEAR MINISTER AND AMBASSADOR,

The undersigned call upon the Turkish government to drop all charges and release journalist and novelist Ahmet Altan and more than 100 journalists who have been detained for carrying out their legitimate journalistic activities. Further, we ask that the government cease detaining and prosecuting individuals for engaging in journalistic work.

According to Amnesty International, freedom of expression in Turkey is under sustained and increasing attack. Since the failed coup attempt in July 2016, academics, journalists and writers who criticize the government risk criminal investigation and prosecution, intimidation, harassment and censorship. At least 156 media outlets have been shut down by executive decree since July 2016. An estimated 2,500 journalists and other media workers have lost their jobs. Arrests and routine use of lengthy pre-trial detention intimidates journalists.

In the case of Ahmet Altan, we understand that he was most recently arrested following the failed coup of 2016. Further, according to PEN America, he was arrested and found guilty of defamation in July 2013 in light of an editorial he published in Taraf and has faced various other defamation charges in connection with his journalism and fiction writing. Altan was sentenced to life in prison on 16 February 2018 for attempting to overthrow the constitutional order through the use of force and violence. We welcome the news that the life sentence was recently overturned by the Supreme Court of Appeals 16th penal chamber. However, we understand that all charges against Altan have not been dropped, he remains detained, and that he still faces charges which carry a penalty of up to 15 years in prison.

We, the undersigned, join with Amnesty International, PEN International and other human rights organization to call on the Turkish government to drop charges against Ahmet Altan and release him immediately along with other journalists unjustly detained. Further we ask that you:

Ensure that media workers can carry out their function of commenting on public issues, informing public opinion, and conveying information and ideas without threats, harassment or intimidation, and are not prosecuted for expressing views that do not constitute incitement to violence;

Ensure that criminal charges brought against media workers are solely for recognizably criminal offences defined in laws which are sufficiently clearly formulated to enable people to know what is permitted and what is not, and do not involve unnecessary or disproportionate interference with freedom of expression;

End the routine use of lengthy pre-trial detention and ensure that any such detention is regularly reviewed by an independent and impartial court and that detainees have access to sufficient information to be able to effectively challenge their detention.

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Prime Minister Nguyen
Xuan Phuc
Số. 16, Lê Hồ.ng Phong,
Bà Đ.nh, Hà Nội, Việt
Nam
Email:
ttll.mfa@mofa.gov.vn

DEMAND ACTION NOW: NGUYEN VAN HAO – VIETNAM

HIS EXCELLENCY PRIME MINISTER,

I am writing to express my concern about the treatment of Nguyen Van Hoa, a journalist and human rights defender who has been imprisoned solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression. Currently held in An Diem Prison, Nguyen Van Hoa has been tortured by prison officials in an attempt to force him to admit his “crime”. After refusing to cooperate, he was placed in solitary confinement on 12 May and has remained there ever since.

Nguyen Van Hoa was arrested in January 2017 after covering a public demonstration on the Formosa environmental disaster. He was convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison on the charge of “conducting propaganda against the state”.

Viet Nam is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention Against Torture. The Constitution of Viet Nam also explicitly bans the use of torture and other ill-treatment. As a result, the Vietnamese government is obligated to end the use of torture by its law enforcement officials, as well as to promptly and effectively investigate allegations of torture and bring to justice anyone suspected to be responsible.

Specifically, I urge you to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Nguyen Van Hoa who is a prisoner of conscience as he has been imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression, and
- Pending his release, ensure Nguyen Van Hoa is protected from torture and other ill-treatment while in prison and that there is a prompt and impartial investigation into allegations of torture.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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