

FREEDOM FOR ANAR MAMMADLI

END REPRESSION IN AZERBAIJAN #COP29

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Mr Simon Stiell
Executive Secretary of the United Nations
Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN Campus
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn, Germany
Also per email: secretariat@unfccc.int

Geneva and Baku, 26 July 2024

Re.: Birthday of Anar Mammadli

Dear Mr Stiell,

Today is the 46th birthday of Anar Mammadli.

Once again, this prominent human rights defender, and advocate for free and fair elections, good governance, recipient of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize awarded by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, will spend his birthday in prison. On 29 April 2024, Anar Mammadli was arrested again and later sentenced to pre-trial detention. He had already been falsely detained from December 2013 to March 2016, as the European Court for Human Rights found its judgement Mammadli vs Azerbaijan, 19 April 2018.

The authorities are this time accusing Anar Mammadli of “smuggling in conspiracy with a group of people” – a charge that has become commonplace in targeting independent NGOs, journalists and media workers in Azerbaijan.

Today, Anar Mammadli suffers from the consequences of the inadequate medical treatment he is receiving whilst in detention. He suffers from obstructive bronchitis, causing breathlessness and difficulty in breathing. His situation is worsening significantly.

This is particularly relevant to you, because Anar Mammadli was the co-founder of the Azerbaijani Climate Justice Initiative. The Initiative was established in view of the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, and was effectively the sole independent civil society coalition in the country working on environment and climate issues in view of COP29.

Anar Mammadli is not the only person arbitrarily detained in Azerbaijan, where a climate of sustained repression has effectively shut down any public dialogue ahead of COP29. To date, [according to](#) Azerbaijani human rights defenders, there are 303 political prisoners in the country. Ahead of COP29, the authorities have in particular targeted media covering the 2023 protests in Söyüdlü against the environmental damage caused as a result of gold mining near the village. Journalists and media workers from all three outlets, Abzas

Media, Toplum TV, and Kanal 13, which have covered those protests were detained. On 10 July 2024, the Ministry of Internal Affairs further increased the pressure on independent civil society actors and media by stating “severe measures” will be taken against participants of potential peaceful protests on the eve of the parliamentary elections of 1 September 2024.

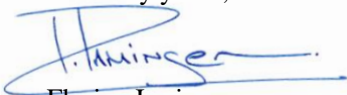
The particularly repressive climate warming up to COP29 takes place in a context in which Azerbaijan has over the past two decades, and particularly since 2013, put in place legislation targeting human rights defenders and criminalising their activities, including by effectively criminalising the receipt of international funding, by exercising total control of NGO activities through an perverse authorisation system, and by refusing access to registration to organisations critical of the government’s policies. The government concomitantly created a media and civil society scene from its own hands with institutions it completely controls. We profoundly regret that the so-called COP29 NGO Coalition is of exactly that nature.

As [stated](#) recently by renown international NGOs, “robust and rights-respecting climate action requires the full and meaningful participation of civil society in climate negotiations, including the outcome of COP29.” Yet, the climate of repression in the country prevents participation from independent national actors and has a chilling effect on the participation to COP29 by international actors.

Whilst we regret that you have not, at the occasion of your recent visit to Baku and in your interaction with the organising committee and actors of COP29 raised the above, we call upon you to:

- Use every opportunity to underline the need for the host country to facilitate and protect the public dialogue and, in this regard, immediately and unconditionally release Anar Mammadli and other human rights defenders and political and civic activists, environmental activists, and lawyers and journalists whose arrests are politically motivated due to their involvement in the public arena in view of COP29;
- At the occasion of your next visit to Azerbaijan ahead of COP29, visit Anar Mammadli in prison;
- Swiftly put in place a mechanism securing space for a diverse participation of national civil society at COP29, including non-registered organisations;
- Publish the Host Country Agreement for COP29 with no further delay.

Sincerely yours,



Florian Irminger

President, Progress & Change Action Lab

On behalf of the Anar Mammadli Campaign to end repression in Azerbaijan

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