

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2012

Ilham Aliyev
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Baku, Azerbaijan

Dear President Aliyev:

We are writing to convey our serious concern regarding the continued imprisonment of Bakhtiyar Hajiyev and to ask that you ensure that Azerbaijan acts in a manner consistent with its obligations under international law.

In November 2010, police and government officials in Azerbaijan began to question and threaten Mr. Hajiyev about fulfilling his duty to perform compulsory military service. This occurred shortly after Mr. Hajiyev publicly criticized many of your government's policies while campaigning in a parliamentary election. In March 2011, Mr. Hajiyev was arrested days before a planned peaceful demonstration against the Azerbaijani government that he had helped to organize. Following a trial that raised concerns among international observers, a court sentenced Mr. Hajiyev on May 18, 2011, to two years in prison for evading military service.

Prior to Mr. Hajiyev's arrest, local authorities reportedly suggested that harm could come to him should he enlist in the military. In addition, there are reports that Mr. Hajiyev endured severe beatings by police during his initial detention. The threats and ill treatment have allegedly continued throughout his detention.

The arrest and cruel treatment of Mr. Hajiyev are a breach of his rights to freedom of expression and association, as well as his right to be free from inhuman treatment. This situation is in clear violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Further, Mr. Hajiyev's claims to the right to alternative civil service—which would have satisfied his public service requirement—were dismissed by your government despite reference to such a right in the Constitution of Azerbaijan.

On May 7, 2012, an appeals court in Azerbaijan held a hearing to determine whether to release Mr. Hajiyev, as he has now served more than half of his two-year sentence. We understand that this appeal is still under consideration.

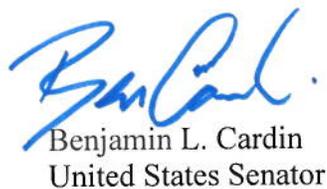
In light of the flaws that have come to our attention regarding Mr. HajiyeV's detention and treatment, as well as the fact that he has already served more than half of his sentence in a dutiful manner, we ask that you help facilitate Mr. HajiyeV's immediate release.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Mark Kirk
United States Senator



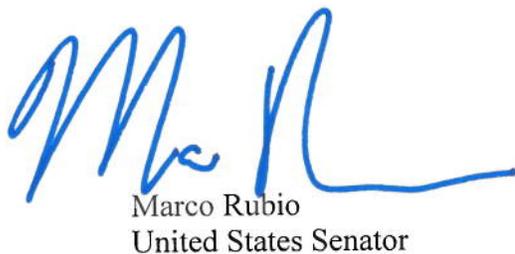
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