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**European Platform
for Democratic Elections**

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To:
European Commission
Leaders of National governments and UNFCCC Focal Points
Members of the European Parliament
Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly

October 30, 2024

Urgent Call: Free Anar Mammadli ahead of COP29

International human rights organizations, civil society groups, and election observers call on European and national leaders to press Azerbaijan to release political prisoner Anar Mammadli and other activists ahead of COP29.

Human Rights Violations Ahead of COP29

With less than three weeks until COP29 in Azerbaijan, we urge global and national leaders to address Azerbaijan's serious human rights violations.

While the incumbent Aliyev regime never had a good track record of human rights, repression in Azerbaijan has raised to unprecedented levels in preparation of presidential "elections" in March 2024 and hosting [COP29](#) in November. This repression has targeted civil society, media, and the legal profession, with strict controls that severely restrict the political opposition. The [presidential elections](#) in February as well as the [snap-parliamentary elections](#) in September were conducted in a repressive climate.

Over 300 human rights defenders, climate activists, journalists, and opposition leaders remain imprisoned, often in conditions that violate Azerbaijan's international [obligations](#) to provide humane treatment and adequate medical care.

Respect to Human Rights is Pre-Requisite for Climate Action

Effective, rights-respecting climate action depends on the meaningful participation of civil society. International climate efforts can only thrive where human rights are respected. The repression in Azerbaijan presents an urgent barrier to international and trustworthy and climate action at COP29.

The case of Anar Mammadli

Anar Mammadli, a distinguished human rights defender and founder of the Climate of Justice Initiative, remains one of Azerbaijan's most prominent political prisoners. His initiative aims to leverage COP29 to promote civic space and climate justice. Anar leads Azerbaijan's only independent election watchdog, the Election Monitoring and

Democracy Studies Centre (EMDS), and co-founded the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE), a network of 17 citizen election monitoring organizations. In 2014, he received the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize for his dedication to human rights.

On April 30, 2024, after observing the presidential election, Anar was placed in pre-trial detention on unfounded charges of conspiracy to unlawfully bring money into the country. This is not the first instance of politically motivated imprisonment for Anar. In 2013, following his election monitoring work, he was sentenced to five and a half years in prison on fabricated charges, which the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) [ruled](#) “politically motivated” in 2018. He was [released](#) after two and a half years due to international pressure.

Urgent Medical Attention Required

Anar’s detention has caused a sharp decline in his health, exacerbating pre-existing medical conditions, including deterioration of eye-sight as well as spine and metabolism problems. Detention authorities do not provide proper medical check-ups and refuse to react promptly to Anar's deteriorating health situation which require immediate medical attention at an equipped and independent medical facility.

Recommendations

We urge National leaders of democratic countries to

1. Call on the Azerbaijani government to repeal in whole the legislation designed to target human rights defenders and civil society and criminalize their activities.
2. work at the UNFCCC to establish a mechanism that prevents COP conferences to be hosted by states that do not respect human rights

We urge Heads of States and State representatives traveling to COP29 to

Use the opportunity at COP29 to not turn a blind eye to human rights abuses in Azerbaijan and reiterate the call of immediate and unconditional release of political prisoners and in particular of Anar Mammadli and highlight the situation of human rights in every public or non-public conversation

We urge the European Commission and the European Council to

1. review its support to human rights-related programmes present in Azerbaijan, including through its funding of the Council of Europe Plan of Action, which is due to review in January 2025; Such review should include independent CSO members and also include the topics of pressing needs of CSOs, such as NGO legislation (registration and funding), torture and ill-treatment, and politically motivated persecutions.
2. review its funding mechanisms for Azerbaijani independent civil society and media and align them to methods used to fund civil society and media in other repressive environments.

3. Implement the [EP resolution 2024/2890\(RSP\)](#) from 24 October 2024, in particular section 8, to introduce sanctions under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime against Azerbaijani officials who have committed serious human rights violations

If you would like your organization to be added to the list of signatories, please send a message to meier@european-exchange.org.

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