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President of Azerbaijan
Ilham Aliyev
Office of the President of Azerbaijan
19 Istiqlaliyyat Street
Baku AZ1066
Azerbaijan

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Dear President Aliyev,

**I am writing to demand the release of academics Bahruz Samadov and Igbal Abilov who have been detained on spurious charges.**

On July 22, 2024, Igbal Abilov, an ethnic Talysh scholar and minority rights researcher and advocate, who has lived in Belarus since he was a child, was arrested while visiting Azerbaijan. He was charged with treason, sedition and incitement of ethnic hatred. On 21 August 2024 Bahruz Samadov, another political scientist, was arrested on charges of treason while staying in Azerbaijan during a break from his doctoral studies. Both have been remanded in pre-trail detention. Neither is allowed contact with their families.

There is no official public information regarding the grounds for the charges against Bahruz Samadov and Igbad Abilov. Their trials are closed and lawyers are not allowed to share information about their cases, but have reported that they deny the charges. According to the media reports, they stand suspect-ed of treason for having communicated with fellow researchers and activists in Armenia, including during meetings and conferences held under the auspices of European institutions.

Their families believe that they have been arrested because of their critical academic research and activism. Bahruz Samedov has spoken publicly against the use of military force in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, and Igbal Abilov has been a vocal advocate for the rights of the national minorities, including the Talysh of Azerbaijan. Their arrests follow a pattern of abuse of the criminal justice system by the government of Azerbaijan to silence its critics.

**I urge you to take immediate action to end all politically motivated prosecutions, release Bahruz Samadov, Igbal Abilov and all persons arbitrarily detained or imprisoned for their dissenting or critical views in Azerbaijan including academics, political and civic activists, journalists and human rights defenders.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Copie**

Botschaft der Republik Aserbaidschan, Kramburgstrasse 10, 3006 Bern

Fax: 031 350 50 41 / E-Mail: bern@mission.mfa.gov.az