

Appeal to the International Community

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends

I would like to bring to your attention that the charges brought against me are completely unlawful and groundless. One might ask why? Because,

1. I was registered as an individual entrepreneur with the tax authorities on 25 August 2008 and obtained a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN). From that time up until now, I fully and timely paid relevant taxes and social insurance contributions in accordance with the funds paid to me for my services under the projects in which I was involved. It can be easily verified by sending an inquiry to tax agencies.
2. The Human Rights Club was founded in December 2010, and at the founding meeting I was elected the chairman of the organization. The Human Rights Club has repeatedly applied to the Ministry of Justice for registration, but due to unjustified and unlawful denial of state registration appeals were made to all relevant courts in Azerbaijan, and at present this case is pending before the European Court.

The process of seeking registration and filing appeals continued from 2011 till 2013; since the legislation during this period did not prohibit the activity of unregistered NGOs, we, as the Human Rights Club, implemented a variety of projects during the years 2011-2013. Each of these projects was carried out under the grant agreements signed with donor organizations which I have voluntarily presented to the Prosecutor General's Office. Also, at the time of signing of these agreements, the Ministry of Justice was informed through relevant letters sent to this state body. Moreover, the funds under each grant were transferred not in a secret or non-transparent manner, but through transfers to the bank accounts open and accessible for law enforcement and other relevant agencies, with the purpose of each transfer being indicated as "grant". Since the Human Rights Club (HRC) was not registered, as the chairman of the HRC the transfers were made to my bank accounts. In this case, what kind of illegal entrepreneurship or abuse of office or tax evasion one can talk about?

You may wonder then why I was arrested.

- a. Let's pay attention to the projects examined by the investigators and covered by the indictment:
 - Human rights campaign related to Eurovision– Sing for Democracy; Art for Democracy campaign that uses different types of art to promote and protect human rights; increasing voter turnout on the eve of elections and so on. Along with being in the spotlight of the local and international community, all of these projects were targeted in libelous and insulting articles of the pro-government media which also included the ruling party's official newspaper "Yeni Azerbaijan".
- b. Azerbaijani government argues everywhere and at the highest level that there are no political prisoners in Azerbaijan. However I and my colleagues do not argue, but prove that there are political prisoners in Azerbaijan.

- c. During the session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held in June 2014, i.e. shortly before my arrest, a roundtable was held on the gravity of the human rights situation in Azerbaijan. I was the person who was directly involved in determination of everything from the technical aspects to the content of the roundtable (together with Intigam Aliyev, Emin Huseynov and Rashid Hajili who are currently persecuted). I was also involved in organizing the flash-mob held by our young friends on the day of Ilham Aliyev's speech. And finally, in the past 2-3 years everyone was asking half-joking, half-serious, when I was going to be arrested. It happened, and now I'm looking forward to your support! Thank you everyone

Sincerely,

Rasul Jafarov

Baku Pre-Trial Detention Center (Kurdakhani settlement)

14 August 2014