

M. Emmanuel MACRON
Président de la République française
Palais de l'Elysée
55 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré
75008 Paris

Brussels, Baku,
18 July 2018

Open letter: President Macron should urge release of prisoners of conscience at 20 July meeting with Azerbaijani President Aliyev

Dear President Macron,

We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned at the deplorable human rights situation in Azerbaijan with over 100 opposition supporters, journalists, editors, bloggers, religious activists and others held on politically-motivated charges in Azerbaijani jails.

The opposition leader Ilgar Mammadov, recognized by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience, continues to be behind bars despite a May 2014 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) stating that his right to liberty had been violated and that his detention was aimed at silencing or punishing him for criticizing the government. In November 2017 the ECtHR additionally ruled that Ilgar Mammadov's right to a fair trial had been violated. Mammadov, one of the leaders of the Republican Alternative Movement (REAL), tried to run for President in 2013, but was arrested on fabricated charges of inciting violent protests early that year. In March 2014, he was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment by a court in the city of Shaki in northwestern Azerbaijan.

Reassured by a response to a previous [open letter](#) issued by our organizations in July 2017, in which the Chief of Staff of the President's Office stated your Government's commitment and close attention to human rights and the cases of political prisoners in Azerbaijan, we urge you to call on President Ilham Aliyev to immediately and unconditionally release Ilgar Mammadov and all others who are imprisoned to punish them for peacefully exercising their rights to freedoms of expression, religion and belief.

The case of Ilgar Mammadov tests the credibility of the ECtHR and the values the European Union stands for. The government of Azerbaijan has ignored the European Court's judgment on this case and defied nearly a dozen resolutions by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe calling for Mammadov's release. On 25 October 2017, to urge for the implementation of the Court's judgment, the Committee of Ministers took an unprecedented decision and triggered infringement proceedings against Azerbaijan under Article 46 (4) of the European Convention. The proceedings could lead to the Council of Europe sanctioning Azerbaijan, for example by suspending its voting rights in the Parliamentary Assembly.

We believe that your intervention can make a difference in the cases of Ilgar Mammadov and other political prisoners in Azerbaijan and trust that human rights will be high on the agenda at your meeting with President Aliyev in Paris on 20 July 2018.

Sincerely,

Rasul Jafarov, Director, Human Rights Club (Azerbaijan)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Jafarov', with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Brigitte Dufour, Director, International Partnership for Human Rights (Belgium)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'BD', followed by a long horizontal line.