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The Problem of Southern Azerbaijan

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The Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva,
Please circulate this letter to:

- The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention
- Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance
- The Independent Expert on Minority Issues

CC Mr. Drewery Dyke and Mrs. Ann Harrison, Amnesty International, London

Also: Human Rights Watch and Human Rights Server

Dear sir/madam,

GENERAL COMMUNICATION 3: OVERVIEW FOR SIX MONTHS BACKLOG OF VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF SOUTHERN AZERBAIJANIS BY IRANIAN AUTHORITIES

Since our last Communication (Ref: 512/2008 on 23 December 2008), we have only submitted one Communication (Ref: 513/2008 on 13 March 2009) but we admit that this is completely disproportionate with the ordeals inflicted on human rights of the nation of Southern Azerbaijan by the ruling Iranian authorities. Due to the limitations of resources, our backlog consists of:

1. **Communications on individual Southern Azerbaijani activists:** as we are unable to provide you communications for individuals whose human rights have been violated by the Iranian authorities; Table 1 compiles summary basic information instead.
2. **Updates on our previous communications:** despite the release of some of the Southern Azerbaijani prisoners of conscience, their human rights are being violated whilst in freedom. For instance, there was insistence by the Iranian authorities ordering Mr. Abbas Leysanlı to change the name of his business from Chenli Bel (Azerbaijani words meaning Misty Outskirts but has the connotation of Camelot).
3. **Implications of the ongoing presidential campaign on national rights of Southern Azerbaijan:** this year the campaign for presidential elections in Iran has created a curious situation, as the National Movement of Southern Azerbaijan is a force to be reckoned with but the Iranian authorities are still spearheading with their singular racist policy in favour of the Farsi-speaking nation. The added dimension in this round of electioneering campaigns are (i) one of the candidates, Dr Ekber E'lemi (Akbar Aalami), was a past Member of the Iranian Parliament representing Tebriz, who acknowledges himself to be an Iranian national but of ethnic Azerbaijani, and (ii) Dr E'lemi is renowned to have a high personal integrity, unusual for Iranian politicians and therefore at disadvantage for his nomination to be ratified; (iii) he was therefore enigmatic for the Iranian authorities, as Dr E'lemi's personal integrity was a threat to arbitrary governance established by nebulous Iranian Hezbollah paramilitary forces; and (iv) Dr E'lemi criticised the Iranian system but swore his allegiance to Azerbaijan, though his reform package was tantamount to overhauling the Farsi hegemony. In spite of this, a group of Azerbaijani activists pledged



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their support to Dr E'lemi but the Iranian authorities contrived an ambiguous outcome for not ratifying Dr E'lemi candidature violating his human rights. We are due to submit a Communication to this end.

4. **The response to an ongoing explicit insult by the former Iranian president Khatami on the national integrity of Azerbaijan:** Iranian authorities have done it again by contriving another racist insult to the national integrity of Azerbaijan, reminiscent of the episode in May 2006! The centre of controversy in this episode is Mr. Khatami, a former president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who uttered words of jokes, unworthy of a president, particularly a president who prides himself for his international engagement on the so called the dialogue of civilisations. He may have issued a flimsy denial of the published film but this is far from truth and we are preparing a Communication on the skilful reaction of Southern Azerbaijan, balancing their fury with measured protests.

We hope that the above provides you with a glimpse of ongoing events, where the Iranian authorities are spearheading their singular policies to promote their so called "Aryan" race. We are keen on your awareness for the national and human rights of Southern Azerbaijan. We thank you in advance for your care.

Yours faithfully,

Eli Tashkent

For and on behalf of
The Committee for the Defence of the Rights of World Azerbaijanis



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Table 1 Collective Account of Violations of Human Rights of Iranian Authorities against Southern Azerbaijani Individuals
Sources we acknowledge using the information published by monthly reports of ADAPP: <http://www.adapp.info/monthly-report>

A. Ordeals against Prisoners of Conscience

No.	Victim's Name	City	Overview
1	Ibrahim Nuri (17)	Eher	Azerbaijani ethnic rights activist; sentenced for 10 month of suspended jail for his past activities.
2	Meherrem Kamrani	Eher / Urmu	Azerbaijani cultural activists arrested in March 2006; detained for 20 days by agents of Intelligence Services in Eher; charged with "propaganda against the regime" for distributing articles and also for participating in meetings deemed illegal; tried on April 11, 2009.
3	Saleh Molla Abbasi	Eher	Azerbaijani cultural activists arrested in March 2006; detained for 45 days by agents of Intelligence Services in Eher; charged with "propaganda against the regime" for distributing articles and also for participating in meetings deemed illegal; tried on April 11, 2009.
4	Ramin Sadiqi Esl	Erdebil	Azerbaijani ethnic rights activist; arrested on 5 Feb 09 and detained on 12 April 09 by Intelligence service; were tortured while indetention
5	Mehemmed Sadiqi	Erdebil	Azerbaijani ethnic rights activist; arrested on 6 April 09 but released on bail on 14 March 09.
6	Vedud Esedi	Edebil / Resht	Trial finished on 28 Feb 09 with a sentence of one year charged with charged with "propaganda against regime" and "propaganda of ethnicity."
7	Beytullah Berzger	Khiyov	Azerbaijani ethnic rights activist; charged with "propaganda against the regime" and "propaganda of ethnicity by distributing articles" for past activities; was sentenced to five months' this year but suspended imprisonment.
8	Eli Huseyni-Nejad,	Maki	Azerbaijani ethnic rights activist; arrested on 4 April 09; to serve an 8 month arbitrary sentence for his protests.
9	Mejrid Makuyi	Maki	Azerbaijani ethnic rights activist; a student of Esfahan's <i>Malek Eshter</i> University; charged with "establishing or membership in illegal organizations in order to organize activities against national security;" sentenced to one year of imprisonment in addition to two years of suspended imprisonment.
10	Hojjetulislam Ezimi Qedim	Qum	An Azerbaijani ethnic rights activist and clergyman; released from prison for his ethnic activities on 26 April 2009
11	Husein Rahimi	Resht	Trial finished on 28 Feb 09 with a sentence of one year charged with charged with "propaganda against regime" and "propaganda of ethnicity."
12	Abdulla Abbasi Javan	Sulduz / Tehran	Was released on 25 February 09, after 105 days of detention in Evin Prison; just one day after the death of his ailing mother. For more info see Our Communication: Ref: 511/2008 on 23 December 2008.
13	Hemid Valai		An Azerbaijani writer and human rights activist; Charged with "propaganda against the regime;" tried in the Tabriz Revolutionary Court; sentenced to three months of imprisonment and nine months of suspended imprisonment. See also our earlier Communication Ref: 499/2008 on 5 August 2008.
14	Irak Heseni	Tebriz	Azerbaijani ethnic rights activist; charged with "violation of public order" and "participating in illegal demonstrations," the outcome of his appeal was an arbitrary sentence of two years of imprisonment.



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15	Mehammed Jerrahi	Tebriz	Azerbaijani Labour activist; sentenced in March 2009 for 4 month of suspended jail for his past activities.
16	Naghi Ehmedi Azer	Tebriz	Cultural activist and writer; arrested on 4 April 09 and detained by security forces
17	Qulam Nejefi	Tebriz	An Azerbaijani ethnic rights activist; charged with “propaganda against the regime;” tried in the Tabriz Revolutionary Court; sentenced to three months of imprisonment and nine months of suspended imprisonment
18	Vehid Shekhabaghi	Tebriz	Arrested on 24 December 2008 and was detained in Tabriz Prison for 49 days; charged with “movement against national security” as well as “violation of public order” a graduate student in economics and a former member of the Arman Student Organization; released on bail (\$50,000) after of detention.
19	Aydin khajeyi	Tebriz	Azerbaijani student activists; tried on January 18, 2009 in a closed court; but was not made public; charged with “establishing or membership in illegal organizations in order to organize activities against national security;” sentenced to one year of imprisonment in addition to two years of suspended imprisonment; see our Communication Ref: 498/2008 on 2 August 2008.
20	Ehsan Nejefi-Neseb		
21	Emir Merdani		
22	Feraz Zehtab		
23	Sejjad Radmehr		
B. Iranian Persecution of Azerbaijani Elevi Religious Minorities			
1	Mehdi Qasimzade,		subjected to execution on 3 March 2009. See our Communication: Ref:513/2009 on 13 March 2009
2	Yunis Aghayan,		He is at a death row. See our Communication: Ref:513/2009 on 13 March 2009
3	Abdulla Qasimzade,		See our Communication: Ref:513/2009 on 13 March 2009 for more background information.
4	Bakhsheli Mehemedi		They are imprisoned arbitrarily and transferred illegally to a remote prison in a Farsi-speaking Iranian city.
5	Sehendeli Mehemedi		



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C. The Onslaught of the Iranian Authorities against Sourthern Azerbaijani Sunni Minorities in Qizil Kheneye, Urmu, a provincial capital in Southern Azerbaijan

1	Allahverdi Aslani	<p>Sunni villagers of Qizil Khanaya in Urmu, gathered to prevent the redirection of the village's underground water supplies for industrial consumption, were charged with "violation of public order" and "revolting against government officials;" Iranian police forces opened fire on 14 January 14 09 against the unarmed demonstrators, attacked the farmers with tear gas, and hundreds of farmers were rounded up; more than 30 people were detained for more than 10 days; some of the detainees were wounded, the detainees were interrogated and tortured before being released; their trial was held in February 2009. The politically motivated arbitrary sentences varied up to 2 years of imprisonment; fine, lashing and exile.</p> <p>Qizil Kheneye is a village with population 2,000, located 30 kilometres north of the Urmu city. The people are mainly Sunni Muslims—Sunni Azerbaijanis—who are called "Sunni Turks" or "Kuresunni," by other Azerbaijanis. They live mainly in Erdebil province as well as in Western Azerbaijan province. Sunni Azerbaijanis in Iran are subject to both ethnic and religious discriminations.</p>
2	Behruz Mejidi	
3	Berzad Nizami Efshar	
4	Behraz Yaqubzade	
5	Ekber Rustemi	
6	Esger Qara Hajilu	
7	Eyyub Ezizpur	
8	Heyder Eli Elipur	
9	Hebibulla Ehmedi	
10	Hojjetulla Ehmedi	
11	Huseyn Vahabzade	
12	Hojjat Mukerrem	
13	Mahad Nizami Efshar	
14	Me'raj Elipur	
15	Mehdi Ismaili	
16	Mehemmed Eshrafi	
17	Mehemmed Jeferi	
18	Mehemmed Menafzade	
19	Mehemmed Nizami Efshar	
20	Mehemmed Samedzade	
21	Mejid Quluzade	
22	Murtaza Jeferi	
23	Seid Jeferpur,	
24	Suleyman Ibrahim	
25	Ziyad Jeferpur	

D. "Name-cleansing" Campaign of the Iranian Authorities Against Turkic Names and other Suppressions

1	Even though the Interior Ministry declared that the order to change Turkish names on Azerbaijani shops to Persian no longer valid after Azerbaijani members of parliament objected, in some cities and towns of Azerbaijan, authorities force shop owners to do so anyway. In some cities, authorities close down shops with Turkish names.
2	Recently in Erdebil, authorities ordered Abbas Leysanli, a prominent Azerbaijani ethnic rights activist, to change his shop name "Chenli Bel". He was issued the warrant on 19 March 2009 and was told that his shop will be shut down if he does not change the name.
3	In Sulduz (Naghadeh) another Azerbaijani city, the barber shop of Efshin Puyende has been shut down because of its name "Gozellik Salonu," which is in Azerbaijani Turkic. The authorities also cancelled his work licence.
4	The music education Centre, "Azerbaijan" directed by Hesem Demirchi, was closed down. This is the third time that this centre has been shuttered by authorities.



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Authorities Undermining Student's Education on Grounds of Activities for National (Ethnic) Rights		
1	Qadir Kiyani	Was refused of admittance to postgraduate studies i March 2009 by the Iranian ministry of Science, Research, and Technology; when Kiyani questioned for the reason, the authority's response was that he was refused on grounds of his activities for defence of Azerbaijani ethnic rights.
2	Emin Imami	These students were denied of postgraduate studies in the university of Tebriz in March 2009 on grounds of their activities for defence of Azerbaijani ethnic rights.
3	Mehdi Haj-Mehemmedi	
4	Habib Babazade	
5	Nadir Mehd Qarabagh	
6	Ms. Nahid Babazade	
7	Semed Pashai	
8	Yashar Keremi	
Repression against Journals		
1	Yaghish	shut down by the cultural council of the Urmu University before its first release. According to Editor-in-chief Emir Qehrremani, the periodical was disallowed on grounds repeating the name of another disallowed periodical with similar objectives of tackling ethnic rights.
2	Achiq Soz	These student periodicals have all suffered similar fate of closure since 2008.
3	Anayurdu	
4	Araz	
5	Aydin Gelecek	
6	Bulud	
7	Gunesh	
8	Isil Ay	
9	Khelej	
10	Kimlik	
11	Nesim	
12	Oyanish	
13	Ozluk	
14	Sayan	
15	Settar Khan	
16	Telenger	
17	Ulus	
18	Yagish	
19	Yarpaq	
20	Yashil	
21	Yol	
22	Yoldash	