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*The Problem of Southern Azerbaijan*

Say (No.): 518/2009  
İlaygün (Date): 26 October 2009

The Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva,

Please circulate this letter to:

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

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

Also: Human Rights Watch and Human Rights Server

Dear sir/madam,

**GENERAL COMMUNICATION 5: FEAR FOR SAFETY OF SOUTH AZERBAIJANI ACTIVITSTS IN IRAN**

Please find enclosed General Communication 5, informing you of the latest round of repression exerted by the Iranian authorities on Southern Azerbaijani youth activists. Last year, one of our communications was submitted for your attention (Ref.: 509/2008; on 17 November 2008), which described the fate of a Southern Azerbaijani activist Mr. Qulamrza Emani together with his two brothers. They were killed in a suspicious road accident but more likely, that was an extra-judiciary execution by the Iranian authorities.

The communication on Mr. Emani conveyed to you a call by Mrs. Shehnaz Qulami requesting you to dispatch a fact-finding group to Iran (she was in Tebriz then, but subsequent to her letter she was imprisoned and now she has become is a political refugee). We understand that this call was not effected and that event remained as one of the dark pages in the history of Southern Azerbaijan.

We wish to bring to your kind attention that the Iranian authorities are even acting violently against the commemoration of the anniversary. The anniversary of Mr. Emani and his brothers were held in Tebriz on 23 October 2009 with his friends and sympathisers coming from all over Southern Azerbaijan including Urmu and Salmas. A number of his friends were arbitrarily arrested by the agents from the Iranian Ministry of Information. They were then taken to an undisclosed location(s). Their names are:

1. Mr. Nevid Mushkati from the Southern Azerbaijani city of Urmu
2. Mrs. Medine Qasimi from the Southern Azerbaijani city of Urmu
3. Mr. Mehemmed Mehemmedli from the Southern Azerbaijani city of Salmas
4. Mr. Aydin Teqipur from the Southern Azerbaijani city of Salmas
5. Mr. Javad Okhtay from the Southern Azerbaijani city of Urmu

Regrettably, such Iranian arbitrary acts have turned into a norm in Southern Azerbaijan and during last five month or so we were unable to focus your attention on the ongoing repression. If international human rights organisations keep appeasing the Iranian violation of human and



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national rights of non-Farsi-speaking nations within the country, these arbitrary acts will escalate toward more frequent extra-judiciary executions.

These are not trivial claims as we can further inform you by the following evidence. We have informed you of the violation of human rights of Mr. Emirabbas Bennayi-Kazimi (Ref: 468/200; on 11 November 2007) in the past. He called the Southern Azerbaijani Television (GunAzTV), (which broadcasts from Chicago, USA), on 24 October 2009 from Tebriz and described his deep sense of repression imposed by Iranian authorities. We can provide you the footage of his talk from the archives of GunAzTV, if requested. He confirmed the repressive acts and unusual behaviours of the Iranian authorities during the anniversary of Mr. Emani's and his brothers' death. He took a great risk in sharing his own ordeal with the audience informing on the escalation of suppressive acts of Iranian security agents. These agents keep harassing him, calling him on telephone and threatening him with the plan that all the national activists of Southern Azerbaijan will meet with a similar fate as Mr. Emani. They have warned him that "Mr. Emani's murder was in vain." According to these statements, security agents threaten the activists to abandon the defence of their national rights, else a grave consequence would be awaiting them.

Mr. Bennayi-Kazimi is 37 years old and an activist and a prisoner of conscience. Since his communication through GunAzTV we are flagging the need for your attention over his safety. We are concerned about the whole situation and in particular we fear for his safety.

The Southern Azerbaijani activists are extra careful to comply with human rights, international law and Iranian laws. None of them have been charged with recognisable breach of any law. For instance Mr. Umid Shukri, a PhD student in Turkey, was arbitrarily arrested when visiting his mother in Erdebil, simply for the reason of studying in Turkey. Although he was recently released on bail, his detention was shockingly arbitrary.

Southern Azerbaijan is now subject to an unusual wave of suppression but the level of threat seems to be pitched at a much higher level. We hope that the international human rights organisations will realise their duty of care and campaign for Southern Azerbaijan as they normally do for any other individuals or ethnic nations under suppression. We believe we are deprived of our fair share and if something goes wrong, let it be known that international human rights organisations appease the racist Iranian policies. We are confident that your organisation is outright in the defence of the national and human rights of Southern Azerbaijan and we hope you are monitoring the situation and will show stern reaction against the racism of the Iranian authorities.

Yours faithfully,

Boyuk Resuloglu

The Committee for the Defence of the Rights of World Azerbaijanis