



Ünvan: Azərbaycan, Bakı, Şərifzadə 1, Ayna; Tel/Faks +47-99399225;
Address: Ayna, Sherifzade 1, Baki, Azerbaijan; Tel/Fax +47-99399225;

www.dunazhak.net
email: dunazhak@hotmail.com

The Problem of Southern Azerbaijan

Say (No.): 491/ 2008
Tarix (Date): 14 April 2008

The Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva

Please circulate this letter to (i) the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (ii) the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (also for Fair Trials). It is also of interest to:

- Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes & consequences
- Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance.
- The Independent Expert on Minority Issues;

CC Mr Dyke and Mrs. Harrison, Amnesty International, London
Also: Human Rights Watch and Human Rights Server and Media

The Leysanli family visiting



Mr. Leysanli, in Erdebil prison

Dear sir/madam,

COMMUNICATION 2 VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF MRS RUQEYYE LEYSANLI BY IRANIAN AUTHORITIES

Please find enclosed Communication 2 for the defence of human rights of Mrs. Ruqeyye Leysanli, whose human rights are continuously infringed by the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran including an arrest on the 12th of April 2008. This Communication builds on Communication 1 (Ref.: 416/2006 on 29 November 2006) for the defence of her human rights.

This law abiding citizen is a housewife and the mother of three children. She is an arduous campaigner for the restoration of human rights of her husband, Mr. Abbas Leysanli, a prisoner of conscience and a figurehead of the national movement of Azerbaijan, whose ordeals have been reported to you through our Communications and updates (see our Communications Ref: 390/2008 on 27 March 2008; Ref: 489/2008 on 25 March 2008; and Ref: 488/2008 on 24 March 2008). She is also outspoken in the defence of the mother language of the nation of Southern Azerbaijan, where there is no single classroom in the mother language of this nation of 30 million, as the Iranian State breaches own laws and forging the so called the “nation of Iran” and delineating Farsi as the exclusive language of the illusive nation of Iran.

This Communication is specifically focussed on Mrs. Leysanli and the appropriate information is presented in **Table 1**, highlighting the aversion of the Iranian authorities to human rights of Mrs. Leysanli, which came to a peak by arresting her.

Over the past few weeks, the Iranian authorities have detained many Southern Azerbaijani activities in Erdebil, Urmu, Sulduz and other places and we hope to compile their details for your attention. However, the case of Mrs. Leysanli exemplify the depth of the national movement of Southern Azerbaijan, that according to the behaviour of the Iranian authorities, the frontline of the national movement of Southern Azerbaijan includes ordinary citizens, such as her, who are determined to foster a safe environment for bringing up children in Southern Azerbaijan governed



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by civilised values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She and many like her in Southern Azerbaijan are paying very heavy prices to uphold the body of human rights. A focus of our appeal to you is that a press release on the defence of Mrs. Leysanli is commensurate with her massive undertaking besides your usual confidential communications to the Iranian authorities.

We hope that you will make representations to the Islamic Republic of Iran to safeguard Mrs. Leysanli's human rights and for this we thank you in advance for your care.

Yours faithfully,

Boyuk Resuloglu

The Committee for the Defence of the Rights of World Azerbaijanis



Table 1: Communication to Safeguard the Entitlement of Mrs. Ruqeyye Leysanli

1. Allegation regarding the person:

Description of the violation of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including date, location and circumstances of the event;

Outline: The victim in this Communication 2 is Mrs. Leysanli but her case is inextricably linked to her husband's case, a prisoner of conscience, Mr. Abbas Leysnli. She is constantly intimidated by Iranian authorities in a variety of ways. In Communication 1 we outlined these to include threatening telephone calls, stalking, socially isolating the family by frightening visitors including friends and relatives and undermining family business by closing down their shop under the pretext of changing the name of business from Chenli Bel, an Azerbaijani expression to Farsi. We provided you the evidence then based on the information given by the family to the Voice of America (VoA), Urgent Actions issued by Amnesty International and our own sources. The Iranian authorities still keep using these mechanisms but are also inventive of new techniques including: illegally holding her husband in prison; transferring her husband first to a prison in a neighbouring city and then to deporting him to 2000Km away from his hometown to a Farsi-speaking remote town, which make visits almost impossible; preventing the rare telephone conversation in their mother tongue; and last time when the family was allowed to have permission for a visit, only 15 minutes were allowed and that was in Farsi (an incredible travel of 75m for every second of conversation in an alien language). These were not enough, now the Iranian authorities have done it, arrested a housewife to prevent her from campaigning for her husband's human rights. The available details are given below.

Name:	Mrs. Ruqeyye Leysanli (her first name may also be transcribed as Rogeyyeh and her surname as Lesani or Lisani)
Age,	22 August 1978
Gender,	Female
Ethnic background	She is a Southern Azerbaijani national, a citizen of the Islamic Republic of Iran – her ethnic affiliation is one of the central issues, as she campaigns for the official recognition of mother tongue of Azerbaijani Turkic.
Profession;	Housewife looking after her three children
Views	Mrs. Leysanli campaigns for the release of her husband who has been deprived arbitrarily of his liberty by Iranian authorities for his exercise of his right to freedom of opinion and expression (for more background see Urgent Actions by Amnesty International e.g.: MDE 13/050/2008 issued on 17 March 2008; or MDE 13/063/2006 on 8 June 2006 and its follow-ups. Her husband's ordeals should also be seen in the background of the May 2006 Mass Protests, which swept throughout Southern Azerbaijan in response to a State-sponsored abuse of the national integrity of Southern



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Azerbaijanis. An estimated 2 million people took part in these protests.

Affiliations

In Iran, non-conformist organizations are persecuted by the Ministry of Intelligence and therefore Mr. and Mrs. Leysanli do not belong to any organization, although Mr. Leysanli has emerged as a leading figurehead of the national movement of Southern Azerbaijan.

Past or present participation in political, social, ethnic or labour group/activity:

To our knowledge, Mrs. Leysanli does not participate in any political, social or labour activity. However, she is an arduous campaigner for her husband during which she also campaigns for the official reinstatement of the status of mother tongue of Southern Azerbaijanis.

Information on other specific activities relating to the alleged violation.

The victim, Mrs. Leysanli, has been subjected to continuous intimidations, some of which are outlined below and building on our Communication 1 (Ref.: 416/2006 on 29 November 2006).

According to Amnesty International (MDE 13/050/2008 on 17 March 2008), the victim has the rights to visit her husband, the right which has been conferred to her and family members of prisoners of every individual human being on the planet Earth by international human rights standards. We are putting the case to you that the Iranian authorities are making impossible the utilisation of this right by the victim by making her to travel 4000Km (both ways) for each visit. In the only visit that has been allowed to her since her husband's deportation, she had to travel 75m for every second of her visit. We understand that the visit was under an intimidating atmosphere with the presence of two prison officers and under the condition that no words must be spoken about the prison conditions (for some details, please refer to a Farsi article in:

http://www.radiofarda.com/Article/2008/04/11/o2_families_under_pressure.html.

The victim is constantly harassed not to publicise the ordeal of her husband that suffered by Iranian racist policies. The above published source for the this claim is the report by Shirin Famili (the URRL address in the previous paragraph), where an interrogating officer responsible to the Leysanli family cases, has threatened Mrs. Leysanli not to communicate her husband's prison conditions to any one, else the authorities will arrest her too and their children will be deprived of supervision. Mr. Feqihi, Mr. Leysanli's lawyer, is reported in the same reference that he is confident that if this information has been released by Mrs. Leysanli, it is deemed to be authentic.



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These threats were materialised on 12 April 2008. Our information, which has also been published in Southern Azerbaijani websites, is that an unspecified number of security agents appeared in front of the door of the Leysanli family at approximately 1.30 in the early morning in April the 12th. They had the warrant for arrest and therefore searched the victim's house, confiscated their personal belongings, books and computers. They then arrested Mrs. Leysanli in front of their three children and took her away for interrogation. She was released daytimes on April the 12th but the actual time of the release has not been specified.

The victim and her family are also prevented from talking in their mother language when contacting Mr. Leysanli on telephone and this is only when it is allowed on rare occasions.

Our opinion is that, Iranian authorities are extremely harsh to the wife of any prisoner of conscience in Southern Azerbaijan, although this may also be true for the other nationals within Iran. The wife of a prisoner of conscience is driven to a vulnerable situation and as a result, she becomes a prisoner in her house. The outcome is that Mrs. Leysanli is forced to social exclusion and without the full enjoyment of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information. At this critical time while her husband is away and when she needs support from fellow human beings and friends, the trauma of social exclusion is an additional dimension associated with the injustice inflicted on Mrs. Leysanli.

2. Allegation regarding a medium of communication:

A description of the alleged infringement on the right:

Mrs. Leysanli wants to exercise her right to freedom of opinion and expression to campaign for the release of her husband, Mr. Leysanli but her right is infringed by the Iranian authorities through the following mechanisms:

The nature of the medium affected (e.g. newspapers, independent radio); including circulation and frequency of publication or broadcasting, public performances, etc

As a result of the infringements onto Mrs. Leysanli's right, their family business is completely undermined and their security is non-existent.



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Political orientation of the medium (if relevant).

We are not aware of any political orientation, other than the solid commitment of the family to purely democratic means and the exercise of human right principles. They are renowned for not compromising human rights.

3. Information regarding the alleged perpetrators:

Name, State affiliation (e.g. military, police) and reasons why they are considered responsible:

The intimidating agents are harboured by the Ministry of Intelligence. These are often nebulous overtly organized militia groups that are heard of but not seen. It is impossible to be more specific than this.

For non-State actors, description of how they relate to the State (e.g. cooperation with or support by State security forces);

N/A

If applicable, State encouragement or tolerance of activities of non-State actors, whether groups or individuals, including threats or use of violence and harassment against individuals exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information.

No one knows who these security agents are but they are certainly harboured by the Ministry of Intelligence officials. They often can get away with anything they do.

4. Information related to State actions:

If the incident involves restrictions on a medium (e.g. censorship, closure of a news organ, banning of a book, etc.); the identity of the authority involved (individual and/or ministry and/or department), the legal statute invoked, and steps taken to seek domestic remedy;

N/A

If the incident involves arrest of an individual or individuals, the identity of the authority involved (individual and/or ministry and/or department), the legal statute invoked, location of detention if known, information on provision of access to legal counsel and family members, steps taken to seek domestic remedy or clarification of person's situation and status;

It is impossible to provide the details of the agents who inflict intimidation acts, as the Iranian authorities are extremely careful to cover their tracks.



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If applicable, information on whether or not an investigation has taken place and, if so, by what ministry or department of the Government and the status of the investigation at the time of submission of the allegation, including whether or not the investigation has resulted in indictments.

The government, Ministry of Intelligence, their overt agents, and Ministry of Justice officials often collude together.

5. Information on the source of the communications:

Name and full address:

Mr. Boyuk Resuloglu,
Ayna, Sherifzade 1,
Baki,
The Republic of Azerbaijan

Telephone and fax numbers and e-mail address (if possible):

Tel/Fax: +47-99399225
Email: bo-diza@online.no or boyuk_resuloglu@hotmail.com

Name, address, phone/fax numbers and e-mail address (if applicable) of person or organization submitting the allegation.

As above
Note that DunAzHAK is an NGO devoted to the defence of human rights.