



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

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

The Problem of Southern Azerbaijan

Say (No.): 526/2010
İlaygün (Date): 15 May 2010

The Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva

Please circulate this letter to the following:

- Working Group on arbitrary detention (also for Fair Trials);
- Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression
- Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance
- The Independent Expert on Minority Issues, and
- Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges

CC UN Habitat for a Better Urban Future: Christine Auclair, and Günter Karl
Mr Dyke and Mrs. Harrison, Amnesty International, London

Also: Human Rights Watch and Human Rights Server

Popular campaign to revive Lake Urmu



A Southern Azerbaijani child eco-campaigns for reviving Lake Urmu
2 April 2010



Mr. Huseyn Nesiri – an eco-campaigner arbitrarily detained



Dear sir/madam,

GENERAL COMMUNICATION 1 CAMPAIGN FOR THE REVIVAL OF LAKE URMU

Please find enclosed General Communication 1 concerning the environmental catastrophe taking place in Lake Urmu, Southern Azerbaijan, providing you information on (i) its environment, (ii) popular campaigns to revive it, and (iii) the Iranian suppression of human rights of the eco-campaigners. The theme of this communication is that Lake Urmu is a significant habitat for the migratory birds supported by species unique to the lake. Yet we are at the wake of another environmental catastrophe reminiscent of Aral Sea and therefore the claim of the “Lake Urmu catastrophe” is not an understatement. Lake Urmu is situated at the heart of Southern Azerbaijan under the governance of the Islamic Republic of Iran but as Iranian authorities allured with becoming a nuclear power, demonstrably the revival of the environmental status of Lake Urmu is put to the backburner. This communication provides you the following three documents:

- Document 1** provides an outline report on the environments of Lake Urmu;
- Document 2** presents the consciousness of the nation of Azerbaijan in Southern Azerbaijan on the looming environmental catastrophe and their campaign to avert the problem; and
- Document 3** presents the aggressive response of the Iranian authorities towards the popular campaign of Southern Azerbaijanis for reviving the lake by aiming to bring its emerging



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catastrophe into the agenda; in Particular, Mr. Huseyn Nesiri, who has been detained since 2 April 2010 for his eco-campaign activities.

The Lake Urmu is registered under the "Convention on Wetlands of International Importance as Waterfowl Habitat (The Ramsar Convention of the UN Treaty Series No. 14583 adopted in 1975), which puts international responsibilities on the Contracting Parties (Iran is a member) for the conservation and management of migratory stocks of waterfowl. Under Article 3 of this Convention, the State of Iran is responsible for formulating and implementing a plan to promote the conservation of this lake and its wise use. Furthermore, the State of Iran is obliged to inform at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of the lake is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. At the same time, Article 50 of the Iranian Constitution stipulates that "It is a public duty of the Islamic Republic of Iran to protect the environment, in which present and future generations should enjoy a transcendent social life. Therefore, economic and any other activities are prohibited, should they instigate pollution or irremediable destruction of the environment." This Communication shows that the reality is far from the truth; the Iranian authorities are not meeting their international obligations; the authorities are acting in their usual brutal manner against the ethnic nation in Southern Azerbaijan; and this nation is alarmed by the destruction of Lake Urmu.

Every day that passes, Azerbaijanis see themselves in front of an increasingly shrinking Lake Urmu as the heart of Southern Azerbaijan is being transformed from a wetland to a wasteland. The alarm of the impacts of this desertification has now been transformed into a popular action and the first wave of this action was orchestrated on 2 April 2010. The significance of this action and the choice of 2 April are outlined in Document 2, and the details presented in Document 3 show you that the Iranian authorities broke their own law (Article 50 of the Iranian Constitution) and suppressed this popular campaign.

The popular campaign was organised by the fans of the national football team of Southern Azerbaijan and as such the response transformed it into a popular eco-campaign participated by football fans, linguistic and cultural activists of the national movement of Southern Azerbaijan and Azerbaijani women. The aim was to enjoy the day and call upon the authorities to take the environment of Lake Urmu serious. The participation of women and families with their children was a striking feature of this eco-campaign.

Southern Azerbaijanis believe that the looming catastrophe can be averted and are therefore increasingly becoming impatient with the inaction and disinterest of the Iranian authorities. It is not surprising that the response was popular. In a normal mindset, the expectation from any authority is to adopt a helpful or at least a neutral position towards campaigners. However, from the early days of the call for the campaign, it was increasingly clear that the intention of the Iranian authorities was to show their iron fist, as they started militarising the Azerbaijani cities. On 2 April, the paramilitary forces set up blockades in all cities and roads leading towards Lake Urmu and their geared up forces had a large intimidating presence in the various locations to serve as destination for the campaigners.

The day on 2 April started with tense situation in Southern Azerbaijani cities instigated by the Iranian paramilitary forces. As the day progressed, the Iranian authorities resorted to violence against the campaigners, as a measure of this ill-intention. In fact, they had their reconnaissance plainclothes agents dispersed among the participants and were filming them. For instance, Mrs. Eshref Azermi from Qoshachay (in Farsi, Miandoab) was a participant but was summoned to the Ministry of Information office in Qochachay and was detained for a number of days. She is an ordinary citizen of Southern Azerbaijan and



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email: boyuk_resuloglu@hotmail.com

keen on the environment. The participation of this 56 years old grandmother (her photo overleaf is attached only in confidence and for the purpose of UNHCHR and other institutions) is a good measure of the concern of the people for the environment. She was just one of 100s arrested and detained and one of some 50,000 who managed to defeat the blockade and make it to the campaign at the coast of Lake Urmu.

Undoubtedly, many more intended to campaign were deterred by the Iranian brute forces. Although Azerbaijanis are just keen in reviving Lake Urmu without politicising it, it seems that in Iran nothing escapes politics if they are associated with the identity of the ethnic nation of Azerbaijan. It is true that, various indicators show that the catastrophe looming at Lake Urmu has been instigated by the incompetence of the Iranian authorities; we would not rule out that the Iranian authorities are deliberately exposing the nation of Azerbaijan in Southern Azerbaijan to the risk of environmental catastrophe. Rather than seeking sustainable solutions, the Iranian authorities hyping this catastrophe with transporting water from the Caspian Sea, sole 600km away and 1300m at a lower altitude. We regard this hype as a measure of their inaction.

Document 1 provides you a concise report on Lake Urmu. We rally for your positive action to save Lake Urmu. There are a range of actions you can help, such as:

- By writing to the Iranian authorities demanding their obligation to comply with law and international conventions
- As dealing with this catastrophe is beyond the capabilities of Iran, you can call upon them by your authority to seek international cooperation and develop a management plan for the restoration of Lake Urmu together with a water resource management plan to Southern Azerbaijan
- By reminding that Iranian authorities that rather than changing the names of the isles in Lake Urmu from Azerbaijani Turkic, they should comply with their legal obligations
- We hope you will condemn the Iranian authorities for the violence they exerted on the eco-campaigners of Urmu Lake; remind the authorities that the case made against them for hundreds of arbitrarily detained campaigners is void from the point of view of international law; those under detention should be released immediately; and in particular we know that Mr. Huseyn Nesiri is still in detention and should be released immediately without any reprisal.

We thank you in advance for your attention and subsequent actions.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. Boyuk Resuloglu
The Committee for the Defence of the Rights of World Azerbaijanis



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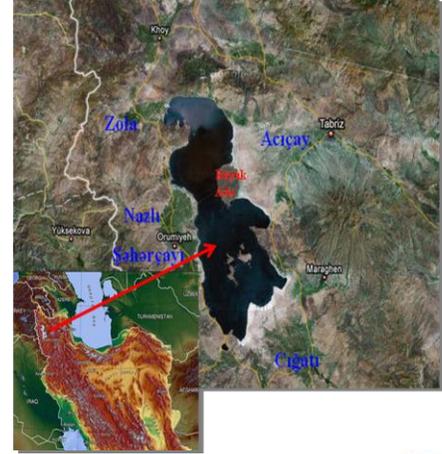
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DOCUMENT 1: Part 1.a Overview of Environmental Status of the Lake Urmu

Overview

Lake Urmu, situated at the heart of Southern Azerbaijan at Longitude: 37°42'N and Latitude: 45°19'E, is unique for a number of reasons, as the following statistics speak for themselves:

- Largest lake in the Middle East and the 6th largest in the world
- Third largest salt water lake in the world
- Registered under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance as Waterfowl Habitat (The Ramsar Convention of the UN Treaty Series No. 14583 adopted in 1975), which puts an international responsibility on Iran (the Contracting Party to the convention) to conserve and manage migratory waterfowl stocks.
- It is the habitat to a species called after the name of the lake, **Artemia Urmiana**

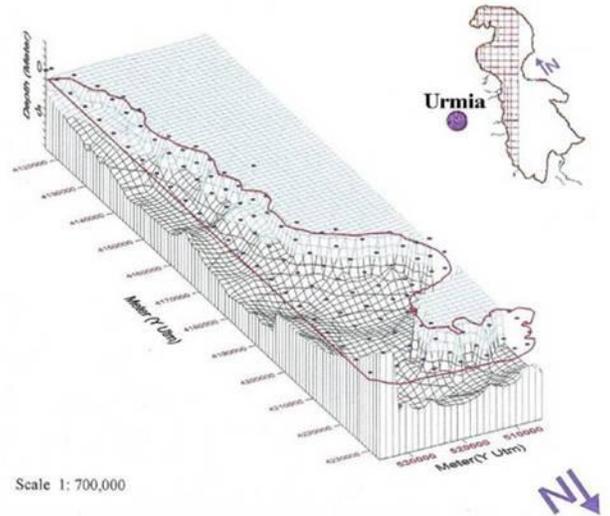


Topographic Features of the Lake Urmu

The lake is situated at a depression, which was probably formed by the erosion of an ancient river flowing into the River Araz before a landslide blocked it. The lake contains 102 isles, most of them with breathtaking sceneries. The largest one is the Isle of Shahi with seven villages and largest non-residential one is Qoyun Daghi Isle and the smallest one Osman Yumrughu.

Its other basic information includes:

- Surface area used to be: 5,500 km², varying between 4750–6100 km²
- Maximum depth of water 55m with the past annual variation of 6m
- Catchment area > 52,700 km²; Length: 140 km and Width: 55 km
- Altitude used to be average of: 1275 mAMSL; Tebriz is at 1350 and the Mount Sehend at 3700 mAMSL



Isle of Osman Yumruqu



Isle of Shahi



A View from the Coast



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Geographical position of Lake Urmu

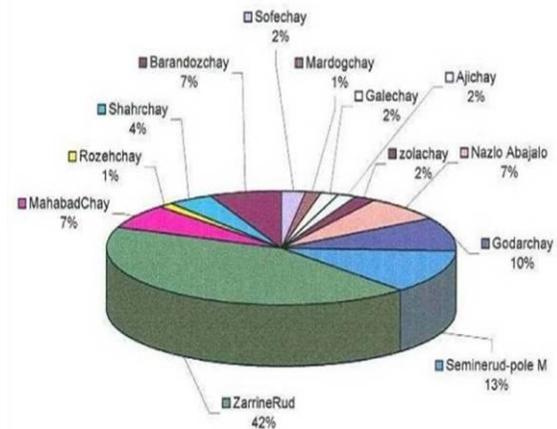
The plains around the basin of Lake Urmu intersect the funnels of the valleys, where there are numerous historic Azerbaijani cities including Tebriz, Urmu, Qoshachay, Sulduz, Khoy, Salmas, Shebuster. Most of the population of the region, certainly more than 10 million, live along the belt of these funnels and as one moves towards the mountainous areas or towards the lake, the population gets sparser. Although the economies of these populated cities are largely driven by mountainous areas with continental climates, Lake Urmu has a very important significance by influencing the climate of the region. Moreover, the immediate vicinity of the lake are overlain by saline deposits, an important function of the lake has been the protection of the environment from windblown salty dusts. In the past, the atmosphere was often clear but over the years, the windblown dust has been contributing to increasingly smoggy atmosphere together with carbon emission from other sources.



Hydrology of Lake Urmu

Whilst Lake Urmu is at the verge of a catastrophe, the basic question is: is it an outcome of natural hydrological process arising from some sort of draught or is it an outcome of incompetent management? Hydrology is one of a key consideration to establish the root causes. Let us identify key hydro-meteorological factors:

- Total volume of the lake: 33 km³
- Inflows from 13 rivers with floodwaters and baseflows, contributions distributed as in the figure
- Outflow is assumed to be by evaporation only
- Average Annual inflows & outflows (evap.): 6 km³
- In a normal year, 6 km³ volume of water gives rise to a fluctuation in area as much as: 1350 km²
- The fluctuation is as much as 25%
- There is no known tectonic leakage from the lake.





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Geomorphology of the Urmu Basin

The depression is only a small proportion of the lake, as over the time it has expanded towards three surrounding large plains:

1. The Tebriz plain to the east has some fertile land only at the fringes of foothills of the mountains but the lake saline deposits has graded the plain towards very agricultural land near the foothills,
2. The Urmu plain to the west is largely fertile and water is plentiful but only coastal fringes are unsuitable for agricultural purposes, and
3. The Qoshachay plain to the south. These plains are overlain by saline deposit layers and their agricultural value is poor and to specially adapted halophyte crops.

These plains are collectors of numerous valleys surrounding the lake at its four sides, the most famous ones are valleys emerging out of the magnificent Mount Sehend (3770m high).

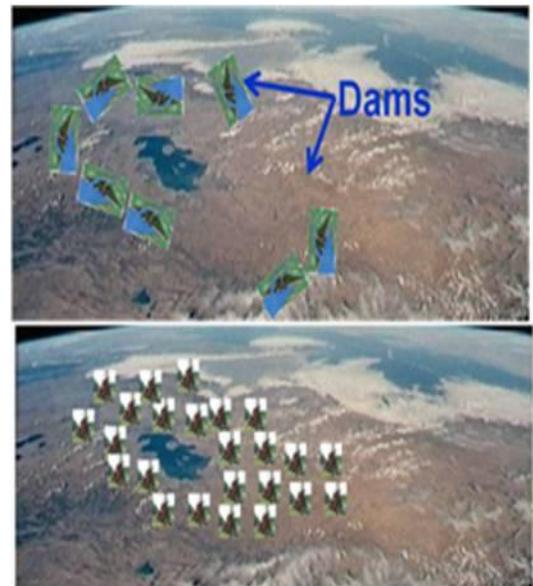


Economy of the Lake Urmu

As the lake is within a depression surround by mountains from all sides, groundwater is gradually seeping towards the lakes from all directions. There has been a thriving agricultural community along a belt between the alluvial fans and the active front of the fluctuating lake surface relying on groundwater for their water supplies. This has been undermined over the years by the following factors:

- Implementation of irrigation and water supply dams
- Driving deep water wells operated by electrical pumps,
- Exporting water from Azerbaijani catchments to other places
- Increasing population creating more demand for water
- Draughts creating more demand for deep water wells.

The lake was also used to be a holiday resort in the past for its therapeutic effects on rheumatism, arthritis and other disease. Deep Wells were driven all over without any permit.



Hydrochemistry of the Lake Urmu

Based on the analysis of few samples the hydrochemistry of the lake is taken to be oceanic type, as cation Na^+ and anions Cl^- , SO_4^{2-} are predominant. Such a classification and the program of data collection need to be taken seriously nonetheless the lake is known to be rich in the following compositions:

- Cations: Na^+ , K^+ , Ca^{2+} , Mg^{2+} , Li^+
- Anions: Cl^- , SO_4^{2-} , HCO_3^- , Br^- , F^- , and B^-
- Amount of salt: 200 g/L
- Total salt in the lake: 66×10^{11} kg salt

The Na^+ and Cl^- concentration is approximately 4 times the concentration of natural seawater. The concentration of sodium ions are slightly higher in the south than the north of the lake, and this together with the shallower depth in the south, it has a bearing on the net evaporation rate.



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The Environment of Lake Urmu

The environment of Lake Urmu is characterised by (i) the oligotrophic nature of nutrients present in the lake and therefore life is sustained by very low level nutrients, growth is fast, rate of metabolism is low, and generally population density is also low; and (ii) salt concentration is greater than 300 gL^{-1} (fresh water lagoons have salinity up to 3 gL^{-1} , salines or hyposaline lakes up to 30 gL^{-1} , and hypersaline lakes up to 500 gL^{-1}) and therefore this is a hypersaline lake; (iii) its origin is obviously an inland lagoon or endorheic lake but some think it is of a thalassohaline origin (i.e. emerged by the evaporation of seawater, even if we ignore the definition of sea and seawater and also of the altitude of this lake, the basin is much smaller than warrant to be called as a sea). Therefore, the environment within itself is very harsh but has a thriving ecosystem sustaining life; at its shorelines, it offers salt marshes to migratory birds; there is a saline band of an exposed soil layer surrounding the land, which is a deposit of the advancing and fluctuating water levels of the lake and the larger basin. With the shrinking water level, the ecological balance of the whole system is seriously undermined.

Ecosystem in Urmu Basin

The ecosystem of the Lake Urmu may be broken down into (i) flora and fauna in the outer land Urmu basin, (ii) flora and fauna within saline soil belt; (iii) flora and fauna within the salt marshes at the advancing/receding front of the water surface, and (iv), the lake. Unfortunately, data/information are sparse on any of these zones but their summary is as follows:

The migratory birds supported by the Lake Urmu include flamingos, white pelican and cranes. The overall species within the larger basin are:

- Birds: 212 species
- Reptiles: 41 species
- Amphibians: 7 species
- Mammals: 27 species, including yellow deer
- The flora of the basin: 546 species
- There is a halophyte tree known as salt cedar (tamarix, in Azerbaijani, it is known as yulğun) is quite widespread around the lake but there has been no attempt to make use of it.

Lake Urmu Supporting Migratory Flamingos



White Pelican

Flamingo

Crane

The ecosystem within the Lake Urmu is largely based on a brine shrimp known as *Artemia* and a species is named after this lake: *Artemia Urmiana*. This is known to contain 60% protein.

Unfortunately, not much research has been carried out on this species and on this ecosystem. For instance, not much is known about the seasonal variation in the population of this species and its lifecycle. The limited sampling activities have been poor in gaining an insight into the various ecological cycles prevailing in the lake and there is no information on vulnerability or resilience of the existing ecosystem on the ongoing rapid shrinkage of the water depth in the lake. Apparently, the Lake Urmu has comparatively low algal biomass and overall low *Artemia* density. The increasing grazing pressure of the developing brine shrimp population in spring seems to prevent the phytoplankton from reaching high blooming concentrations.

Owing to the absence of a systematic program of sampling, there are confusions on the algal biomass supporting the artemian population of the lake. The algal species found in the lake include:



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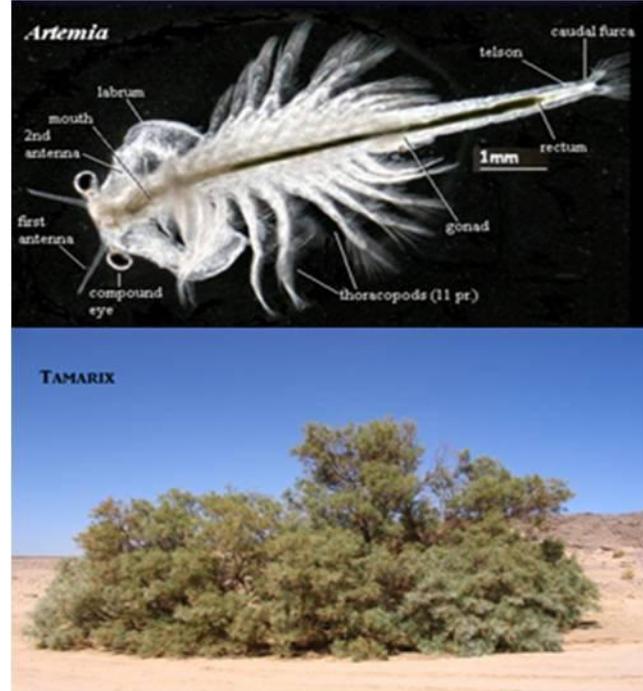
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Some contradictions have appeared in the literature concerning the phytoplankton populations of Urmu Lake. The following has been found in the lake:

- In the years with low concentration of salt: *enteromorpha* becomes abundant in the whole lake giving rise a thin vegetable soup at the surface
- Cyanophyta (with its species including: *Anabaena* sp., *Anacystis* sp., *Chroococcus* sp., *Lyngbya* sp., *Oscillatoria* sp. and *Synechococcus* sp.)
- Chlorophyta (with its species including: *Ankistrodesmus* sp., *Dunaliella* sp., *Monostroma* sp. and *Pandorina* sp.)
- Bascillariophyta (with its species including: *Amphora* sp. and *Navicula* sp.)
- Traces of *Enteromorpha intestinalis*, a macroscopic green alga

Microalgae species composition of the Lake Urmu consists largely of *Dunaliella*, with an important fraction of diatoms like *Navicula* and *Nitzschia*.

Very few bacteriological sampling are available and those carried out on sediments of the lake indicate no pathogenic bacteria in the lake but non-pathogenic bacteria are present in the lake for the assimilation of detritus artemia, as detected in Lake Urmu. There are no reports on the significance of the two detected pathogenic bacteria, *Clostridium perfringens* and *Streptococcus faecalis*, in the lake but have been attributed to the outfalls of rivers flowing to the lake originating from agricultural runoff.



Environmental Impact Assessment of Lake Urmu

The ecosystem within Lake Urmu together with that of the surrounding areas including the larger Lake Urmu Basin is undergoing an environmental catastrophe. There is no insight for the key factors and the tendency is to blame the situation on draught. Certainly, the role of draught and population rise is an important factor but the absence of planning is the key factor. For instance, the *ad hoc* deep water pumps driven in the wells surrounding the lake is one such factor that depletes it without a foresight on its impacts. Another major factor is a number of dams driven on the rivers contributing to the lake. These have undermined the fragile hydrological cycle of the Urmu Basin.

Impending Catastrophe

Azerbaijanis believe that the fate of the Aral is looming over the Urmu Basin but this one can be averted through a management plan and actions are needed now to avert the catastrophe. The impending catastrophe would have the following dimensions:

- Southern Azerbaijan is losing a priceless natural resource and natural wealth in terms of the adapted local species that have taken billions of years to evolve but we are at risk of losing them in one generation
- The wind-blown salt toxicity will have an incalculable effects on the health of the nation
- Microclimate change will have a huge adverse effect on crop patterns and agricultural production,
- Water supply and irrigation demand on water will suffer from unmanageable levels of uncertainty
- The significant loss of artemia urmiana undermines the migratory patterns of birds





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Mitigation Measures

There is one measure speculated by the Iranian authorities, which comprises the transfer of water from the Caspian Sea to Lake Urmu. This is a grand plan with no regards to reality. In the first place, the Caspian Sea is some 600 km away and 1300m at a lower altitude. The technology to implement such a plan is feasible but it is doubtful if the Iranian technology can deliver this in the span of 5-years. Even if an international consultancy is sought to fulfil the wishes of the Iranian authorities, undoubtedly this will be regarded as a white elephant and a mean to milk Iran rather than do a professional job. A white elephant of this kind was actually implemented in the past in Lake Urmu by connecting Urmu to Tebriz through an earth-dam running from the narrowest section of the river. The bridge sank in a short length of time for obvious civil engineering reasons even though these were not obvious to the theocratic engineers. The Iranian authority then invited Armenian engineers to implement an iron bridge through the deepest section of the road alignment. This bridge did not even last a year and most of it was sunk and bits of it are remaining, which are the pinnacle of the Iranian-Armenian cooperation. It is believed that this project contributed to the emerging catastrophe.

The proposal of transfer of water from the Caspian Sea to Lake Urmu is unlikely to ever go to a design room but if it does, it is likely to fail. A more professional way is to develop a management plan of the Lake Urmu Basin covering water use, irrigation pattern, land use, population rise and the risk of climate change to count but some of the factors. It is likely that water is sufficient but the efficiency of its use is poor. Also, the Iranian authorities are known to transfer Azerbaijani water from the Sehend catchments near Miyana to paddy fields of rice in Gilan, a non-Azerbaijani region, and very near to the Caspian Sea. They should stop this act (which takes place without the consent of Azerbaijanis) and transfer that water to Lake Urmu, which is far fairer option or divert water from the Agh Chay (River) or Qotur Chay (river), only 30 km north of Lake Urmu. We are campaigning for the development of the Urmu Basin Management Plan and believe that through a planned approach this catastrophe can be averted.

See also the photo album in **Part 1.b**

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Acknowledgement

The photos have been taken from a diversity of sources and without intending to plagiarise their work, no particular individual's name is given here, other than our appreciation of their works, whether they agree this text or not.



Ünvan: Azərbaycan, Bakı, Şərifzadə 1, Ayna; Tel/Faks +47-99399225;
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Document 1 – Part 2: A Photo Album of Lake Urmu





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These are not mud marshes but Exposed salt bed of Lake Urmu, the Gift of the Islamic Republic of Iran



The Lake Urmu of the Past in the Living Memory



DOCUMENT 2

Popular Initiatives of Campaigning for the Revival of the Late Urmu

The Iranian authorities are spearheading a singular racial policy by excluding the non-Farsi-speaking ethnic nations and this is at the expense of undermining their language and culture, including their environment. Southern Azerbaijanis oppose such a policy by expressing their identity as a nation in a variety of ways including:

1. Uncompromisingly stiff line of defence for the preservation and development of the Azerbaijani Turkic as the national language of Southern Azerbaijan and the recognition of the official status of this language as one of the fundamental preconditions for any confederation within the country.
2. Uncompromisingly stiff line of defence for the preservation and development of the culture of Southern Azerbaijan
3. Sport in Iran is no longer under the banner of Iran but Southern Azerbaijan is now expressing own identity in football and striving to cut off the Iranian control
4. As an environmental catastrophe is looming over the environment of Southern Azerbaijan under the direct control of the Iranian authorities, Southern Azerbaijanis seek a way out.
5. A more pronounced role of women's right as a fundamental link in the body of the national movement of Southern Azerbaijan

A campaign to save the environment of Southern Azerbaijan from the looming disaster brought together a popular support from the Azerbaijani nation, encompassing supports from the linguistic and cultural activists, sport fans, Azerbaijani women movements and the environmentalists. Document 2 summarises one of their initiatives.

As it is clear from Document 1, Parts 1.a and 1.b, the nation of Azerbaijan is alarmed by the Iranian inaction on preventing the desertification of Urmu Lake and therefore in February 2010 the sport fans of the national football team of Southern Azerbaijan proposed a fun day to take place on 2 April 2010. The national team is known as "Tiraxtur", pronounced as tirakhtor and it is the Turkification of the word "tractor." This is a professional team founded in 1970 by the Tebriz Tractor Manufacturing Complex. The supporters of this team can really mobilise more than 100,000 active fans at any time and this is becoming a living legend and unprecedented by the Iranian standards. Naturally, the success of response for this call on a fun day was clear from the onset. The wider support was reflected by the preparation from all sectors and cities of Southern Azerbaijan with posters, CDs and poetry. A film was prepared by Azerbaijani environmentalists in Azerbaijani and distributed widely (<http://www.azadtribun.net/Urmu-gol.asf>). Some of these posters are attached below.

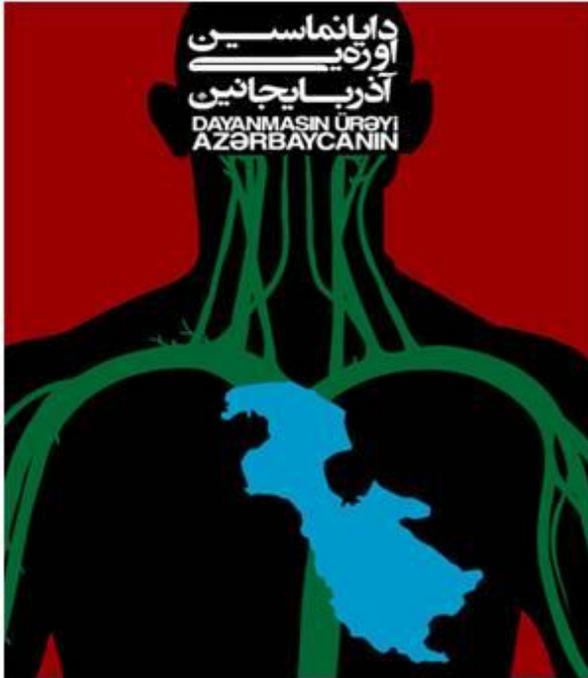
The choice of the 2nd of April also warrants some explanation. This is related to the celebration of the spring equinox, which its history in Azerbaijan goes back to prehistory, including the historic records remaining from both the Azerbaijani and Sumerian cultures. This day was registered by the Republic of Azerbaijan in the General Assembly of the United Nations (Sixty-fourth General Assembly, Plenary, 71st Meeting), as a world heritage day celebrated by more than 300,000 million people in the world in the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and other regions.



Ünvan: Azərbaycan, Bakı, Şərifzadə 1, Ayna; Tel/Faks +47-99399225;
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www.dunazhak.net
email: boyuk_resuloglu@hotmail.com

The 13th day after the equinox day is devoted for a day-out fun day. Its pragmatic sense for outdoor activities has overtaken its rather existentialistic philosophy, which is related to the division of calendar periods (e.g., divisions in a year follows pragmatic activities but a philosophic reflection of this is transferred to the millennial divisions). As a year is divided into 12 months and 4 seasons, each month divided further for 4 weeks; this system was duplicated over to the division of millennia into 12 perfect ones and associating each quarter divisions with a certain existentialistic events and developments but foreseeing a destruction and rejuvenation upon entering into the 13th millennium. The myth has it that 13th day of the spring equinox (the 2nd or 3rd of April) is a reflection of such a supposed destruction. This old mindset mobilises the people for a proactive measure of minimising the losses of the destructive forces by calling out of houses and going into open spaces. Of course, nowadays this myth is not believed by any one, as the notion contains no grain of truth but traditionally, people still call out to the open space on the 13th of the equinox day. This year it served an ironic purpose of symbolically reminding Azerbaijanis to mobilise their active support for the environment.



The Caption:

Wish no Seizure to the Heart of Azerbaijan



The Caption:

Do you hear the voice calling us
And uttering that I am depleted and thirsty?



Document 3

Part 1: Depriving Citizen of Southern Azerbaijan from their Liberties by the Iranian Authorities in Campaigning for the Revival of Lake Urmu

Overview

The sequence of events for the popular rally for the revival of the Lake Urmu since March 2010 includes:

1. In the early March 2010, the fans of the national football team of Southern Azerbaijan called for the day-out on 2nd of April.
2. The Iranian authorities failed to act as an authority and resorted to showing their iron fist to the campaigners, even though Article 50 of the Iranian Constitution stipulates their public duty to protect the environment and prohibit any activities leading to the destruction of the environment.
3. UrmuNews provided an almost continuous coverage of the events with bulletins nearly every quarter of an hour as the day progressed and they are outlined, as follows:
4. **2 Feb, 11p.m.** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-310.aspx>): A large number of Azerbaijanis are moving towards the bridge crossing Lake Urmu but there is a large presence of the armed police guards, the traffic is congested.
5. **2 Feb, 11.30p.m.** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-311.aspx>): Four buses of armed police guard are patrolling the highway bridge on Lake Urmu and threaten the participants to disperse or else they ruthlessly fine them.
6. **2 Feb, 11.45p.m.** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-312.aspx>): 10 participants from Urmu were the first victims of the Iranian arbitrary arrests, who were arrested on the bridge and were taken to undisclosed detention units.
7. **2 Feb, 12 p.m.** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-313.aspx>): The police attacked the carnival of participants and they were cornered, so on the highway bridge they were moving towards Tebriz.
8. **2 Feb, 12.20 p.m.** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-314.aspx>): On the Urmu side of the highway towards the bridge, all the side roads leading to the highway are closed and blockaded and on the Tebriz side of the highways, the reports indicate that the police attacked 700 participants.
9. **2 Feb, 12.30p.m.** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-315.aspx>): The first news from the popular response in Sulduz, reaching some 10,000 participants, indicates that the Special paramilitary forces attacked the eco-campaigners when they were rolling out their banners on the environmental problems of Lake Urmu. The forces attacked by using teargases.
10. **2 Feb, 13 p.m.** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-316.aspx>): Approximately 20,000 eco-campaigners are heading towards Lake Urmu from Urmu and the tail of the carnival of the cars reaches some 20 km. A clash was broken between the police forces and the eco-campaigners when the campaigners chanted their songs on the degrading environment of Lake Urmu. When the police attacked by teargas, they were forced to retreat by the eco-campaigners throwing back missiles of stones.



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

11. **2 Feb, 13.15p.m.** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-317.aspx>): Eco-campaigners managing to arrive to Lake Urmu from Tebriz some 70km away by bypassing the road blockades, some 2000 individual had reached the lakeside by 13.00 p.m. but were confronted by 300 hostile Special paramilitary forces. The eco-campaigners were dispersed by the hostile forces and two individuals were arrested. Their names are: Yaqub Remezani and Mehemmed Tebrizi, both from the capital city of Tebriz. At this time, the news was received that two buses carrying eco-campaigners from Tebriz were collectively arrested near the town of Ilkhichi and their belongings were confiscated.
12. **2 Feb, 13.30 p.m.** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-318.aspx>): The dispersed eco-campaigners on the Tebriz side of Lake Urmu were heading towards the Village Agh Gumbez to regroup and move towards the Urmu side of the lake.
13. **2 Feb, 14.45 p.m.** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-319.aspx>): the dispersed eco-campaigners are struggling to reach the village of Agh Gumbez, while clashes between the eco-campaigners and the paramilitary forces have led to casualty (5 paramilitary agents and 10 Azerbaijani eco-campaigners were injured). These took place when plainclothes agents were spying on the eco-campaigners for reconnaissance by filming. The atmosphere around Lake Urmu now resembles the conditions of a martial law.
14. **2 Feb, later on the day:** The first films on the environmental campaign for the revival of Lake Urmu are entered into Youtube: <http://uploading.com/files/get/b7594>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=238Q95Fbois>; and the picture are displayed in the Azerbaijani websites: (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-322.aspx>), more films: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNtDw1C6w_k; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YkV6S9uJrc>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJIVffNBGtI>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pw1w2-L-6bc>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGbQkIf4bkM>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEhNoOEUIrE>
15. **3 Feb** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-324.aspx>): The eco-campaigners in two buses from Tebriz arrested near Ilkhichi, were interrogated, 11 of them were detained and the remaining 36 were temporarily released under bail.
16. **3 Feb** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-326.aspx>): more pictures were published from yesterday's campaigns.
17. **3 Feb** (http://www.savalansesi.com/2010/04/blog-post_02.html): Savalan Sesi and ADAPP report on the aftermath of what was supposed to be a fun day but the Iranian authorities turned it into a show of force and brutal attacks and road blockages within 50 km distances of the circumference of the lake, including the key coastal cities of Urmu, Sulduz and Salmas. The report described the initiatives of the eco-campaigners such as pouring water from their cans into the exposed desolate lands to symbolise their call for the revival of the lake. It also describes the acts of the Iranian authorities in violating the citizen and human rights of the eco-campaigners, such as blockades, attacking by teargas, fining the cars of the participants, using violence and detention. Estimates showed that more 100 individuals were arrested and the names of some of the individuals detained then are as follows:



Ünvan: Azərbaycan, Bakı, Şərifzadə 1, Ayna; Tel/Faks +47-99399225;
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www.dunazhak.net
email: boyuk_resuloglu@hotmail.com

1. Yaver Jemali
2. Muruza Evezpur,
3. Mehemmed Tajdehi
4. Mensur Seyfi
5. Arslan Zarei,
6. Hemid Valayi,
7. Ehmed valayi,
8. Hueseyn Nesiri
9. Esger Seduqi
10. Mehemmed Tebrizi
11. Eli Baghbani
12. Yaqub Remezeni
13. Yaqub Javani
14. Rehber Ismaili,
15. Reshid bazbaz,
16. Javid Nezmi,
17. Ehmed Qulupur,
18. Ehsan Remezani,
19. Esger Firuteni
20. Hadi Khudabende
21. Jelil Budaqi,
22. Mehemmed Mehemedli
23. Eziz khan Sadiqzade
24. Huseyneli Mehemedi,
25. Ehmed Elizade,
26. Yasin Ferid Meydanlar,
27. Emir Zarei
28. Eli Pakbaz,
29. Eli Mehdizade
30. Bilal Hatemi,
31. Nasir Bakhtyari,
32. Taib Lutfi,
33. Yashar Kazimzade
34. Hebib Mehri,
35. Resul Rezevi,
36. Yaqub Kerimi,
37. Sediqi (the driver)
38. Seid Jahani,
39. Sabir Jahani
40. Nadir Mahmudi
41. Qadir Mahmudi
42. Tahir Mahmudi

- **16 February 2010** (<http://www.urmiye.blogfa.com/post-332.aspx>): A number of detainees released under bail were summoned again to the offices of the Ministry of Information.



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Part 2: Translation of a News Item – Detention of a 60 Years Old Eco-campaigner Grandmother

GünAzTv (South Azerbaijani TV-

http://www.gunaz.tv/index.php?lang=aze&page=37&pluginNews_v1_catID=1&pluginNews_v1_itemID=35647&inner=1): A sixty year old mother in Qoshachay, a city in Southern Azerbaijan, was summoned to the office of the Ministry of Information, operating in Qoshachay rallying the campaign for the desertification of the Lake Urmu Basin, as its water is depleted.

Her name is Mrs. Eshref Azermi Shotorbani and was summoned by the Iranian authorities on 7 February 2010. Now there is no information on her whereabouts. She is known to suffer from heart problems and therefore her family members have issued a communiqué.

The national and cultural activists of Qoshachay hold that this arrest was solely related to her rallying for Action to prevent the loss of Lake Urmu.

She has also been known to take part in the Antiracist Mass Protests of May 2006 against the Iranian authorities. She was then arrested and detained for a few days. She was released after a few days but has been a frequent victim of harassment of the Iranian paramilitary forces.

Part 3: The Case of Mr Huseyn Nesiri, an Eco-campaigner arbitrarily Detained by Iranian Authorities

(<http://www.free-nesiri.blogfa.com/>)

Huseyn Nesiri was arrested on 2 April 2010 when taking part in the eco-campaign for the revival of Lake Urmu. After his arrest was taken to Tebriz and detained somewhere there. There is no communiqué on him by the Iranian authorities but his relatives are certain that he was detained. Since then there is even no telephone call from this victim and his relatives fear that he has been tortured, while in detention. His family members state that the authorities do not even respond to the questions on his whereabouts.

