



IFLRY STATEMENT

30 April 2014

And the Prize for Youngest Political Prisoner goes to... Azerbaijan!

17 years of age and already detained for your political ideas. That makes Shahin Novruzlu the youngest political prisoner in the world. IFLRY stands up for Shahin and seven other activists of the pro-democracy Nida Civic Movement (N!DA). They have been detained and falsely charged with possessing explosives and intent of creating public disorder in the past year. They and their families are currently on hunger strike.

The group of activists had called for a peaceful protest against injustice in Azerbaijan through a Facebook event in February 2013. Shortly after, they were arrested and some of them tortured; the youngest activist, Shahin of 17, lost four of his front teeth, and Mammad Azizov losing his hearing in his left ear. We join Amnesty International in their [call](#) to release these youth activists.

N!DA activists participated in IFLRY's trainings in 2012 and 2013. IFLRY Caucasus Programme Manager Inge Snip: *"IFLRY fully supports N!DA's aims and goals, to achieve democratic and social changes in Azerbaijan, and strongly condemns the authorities' attempts to silence the organization by fabricating bogus charges. We are proud of young people like Shahin and his fellow activists Ilkin Rustamzade, Zaur Gurbanli, Rashadat Akhundov, Rashad Hasanov, Uzeyir Mammadli, Bakhtiyar Guliyev and Mammad Azizov for standing up for their rights."*

Now one year later and still awaiting trial, the detainees and their direct families have initiated a hunger strike in response to the false charges and torture. In their statement, they reinforce the peaceful character of the organization: *"The hours-long interrogations and the rather comic show called "trial," proved that our arrest was a political order for exercising our rights. [...] Our aim is to achieve freedom through peaceful means - the eternal method of N!DA."* Rashadat Akhundov, one leader now in prison commented on their hunger strike: *"This is a new phase of the moral struggle for your and our freedom. Perhaps it is the last phase for us. Since either they have to set us free, or we will leave this place as dead bodies. There is no other way. This is our only demand."*

This is not the first time that the members of N!DA have been harassed by the ruling elite. In 2012, one year after it was founded, the police raided N!DA's office, seized several documents and detained blogger and activist Zaur Gurbanli, now again among those detained.

IFLRY President Christian Scharling: *"As Azerbaijan assumes the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in the Council of Europe on the 14th of May, IFLRY calls upon the Azerbaijani government to take human rights seriously and release these and other political prisoners immediately. Additionally, IFLRY urges the Council of Europe to actively monitor and secure the implementation of the 2014-2015 Action Plan to support reforms in the field of human rights, rule of law and democracy in Azerbaijan, as adopted by the 1197th meeting of Ministers' Deputies on 16th of April. When Shahin and the other N!DA activists are not released on 14 May, the chairmanship of Azerbaijan will be tainted and hypocrite."*

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