

TAKE ACTION: Please cut and paste this letter onto your personal or Institutional letterhead calling for the immediate release from prison of journalist Eynulla Fatullayev.

June 8, 2007

President Ilham Aliyev

Office of the President of the Azerbaijan Republic

19 Istiqlaliyyat Street

Baku AZ1066 Azerbaijan

Fax: 00 994 124 92 06 25

President,

I wish to add my name to this appeal from PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the international writers' organization, International PEN. PEN Canada is writing to protest the imprisonment of journalist **Eynulla Fatullayev**.

Eynulla Fatullayev is known for his frequent criticism of Azeri officials and for exposing instances of government corruption. Pressure on Fatullayev to stop his journalism had been building for over a year. Fatullayev was forced to suspend publication of his newspapers on October 1, after his father was kidnapped. The kidnappers threatened to kill both Fatullayev and his father if he continued publishing the newspapers. The editor had to stop publication of the paper in exchange for his father's release. Fatullayev renewed publishing only two months later, but acknowledged that he did so at his own peril, since the kidnappers remained at large.

In March, after publishing an article accusing the Azeri authorities of obstructing the investigation into the murder of *Monitor* editor Elmar Huseinov, Fatullayev reported death threats against him and his family. The Azeri authorities refused to investigate these claims or offer to protect Fatullayev.

Soon after the statement attributed to Fatullayev about the Khojali massacre began to circulate on the internet in February, protestors organized several rallies in front of the Realni Azerbaijan office and threw eggs and stones at the office windows. Police did nothing to stop the protestors.

In recent months, high-ranking state officials have initiated criminal defamation charges against Fatullayev. In September, Fatullayev was handed a two-year suspended sentence and forced to pay damages in a criminal libel case brought by Interior Minister Ramil Usubov. Usubov has brought similar charges against numerous other independent journalists and newspapers.

The conviction of Fatullayev comes amid the Azerbaijani government's growing hostility toward independent and opposition media, which raises serious concerns about the future of independent media and the security of journalists in the country. Violence and the threat of violence against journalists have become frequent in Azerbaijan, and often such crimes are committed with impunity. A dramatic increase in defamation charges brought against journalists by state officials has further contributed to the deteriorating environment for freedom of expression.

PEN Canada protests the conviction of Fatallayev and calls for his immediate and unconditional release in accordance with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. PEN Canada also calls for the provision of protection to Fatallayev and his family against attack, and expresses concern about the growing repression of the media in recent months, with the sentencing of a number of journalists and writers, some of whom have received threats to their safety.

Sincerely,

[Your name and address]

Appeals to:

Minister of Internal Affairs

Lt.-Gen. Ramil Usubov
Ministry of Internal Affairs
Husu Hajiyevev Street 7, 370005 Baku, Azerbaijan
Fax: 00 994 12 492 0625

COPIES TO:

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Please send copies of your appeal to the following Canadian authorities:

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