

Opposition politician banned from leaving the country

The head of the Political Management Institute in Azerbaijan, independent politician Azer Gasimli, has been banned from leaving the country. On November 22, Azer Gasimli was informed at the Baku International Airport that he **was prohibited** from leaving the country.¹

He had planned to travel to Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, on November 22, and from there to Berlin. At the passport control at Baku International Airport, he was informed that the Ministry of Internal Affairs had imposed a ban on his departure from the country.

"I believe that this ban is a political decision and is pressure against me for criticizing the government's policies. This ban is illegal and can only be imposed based on slander," he told the local media.

On November 25, Azer Gasimli was summoned to the Baku City Main Police Department, where he was interrogated as a witness. He was released after three and a half hours.

Azer Gasimli stated that he was questioned as a witness in a criminal case and did not disclose which case it was, as he had signed a written confidentiality agreement.

He also mentioned that he was asked many questions during the investigation regarding the activities of the Political Management Institute he leads.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has not yet provided an explanation regarding the reasons for Azer Gasimli's ban on leaving the country.

Azer Gasimli has faced such restrictions before. On September 29, 2016, when he attempted to travel to Georgia via the Boyuk Kasik border post to attend a conference, the border guards informed him that **a ban on his leave** from the country had been imposed by the Prosecutor General's Office.²

On September 29, 2016, A. Gasimli applied to the Investigative Department for Serious Crimes of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan, stating that there was no legal basis for the ban on his departure from the country and demanding its immediate removal. However, the restriction on his departure was not lifted.

He appealed to the European Court of Human Rights on March 7, 2017, regarding this issue. The court ruled in his favor on December 13, 2018. The Azerbaijani government did not file an appeal against this decision, and on March 13, 2019, the European Court's ruling came into force. In 2019, the ban on Azer Gasimli's departure from the country was lifted.

¹ <https://turan.az/en/politics/azer-gasymly-summoned-to-capitals-police-station-787411>

² <https://abzas.org/en/2019/6/az%C9%99r-qasimlinin-sikay%C9%99ti-uzr%C9%99m%C9%99hk%C9%99m%C9%99-novb%C9%99ti-d%C9%99f%C9%99-t%C9%99xir%C9%99-salindi/>

Detention period of political prisoners unjustifiably extended

Anar Mammadli's detention period extended

On November 20, the Baku City Khatai District Court **extended** the detention of Anar Mammadli, the head of the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center and a political prisoner, for an **additional three months**.³

The court extended the detention period based on the submission made by the Baku City Prosecutor's Office. Although an appeal was filed against the court's decision on November 26, the **appeal was rejected**.⁴

The court also rejected the defense's motion to place Anar Mammadli under house arrest.

A representative from Amnesty International, Ane Tusvik Bonde, who was in Azerbaijan for the COP 29 event, along with other foreign and local human rights defenders, as well as representatives from the U.S., French, and German embassies, were not allowed into the courthouse. "This is illegal because they have the right to participate in public proceedings like other individuals," said Anar Mammadli's attorney, Javad Javadov. The attorney further stated that Anar Mammadli, who participated in the court session, considered the extension of his detention unjustified and described his imprisonment as a political order.

The attorney also mentioned that the human rights defender's health had seriously deteriorated, and he needed to receive proper medical treatment.

"We applied to the Khatai District Court for his examination at a civilian clinic, but the court did not approve it," his attorney stated.

Anar Mammadli was detained on April 29 of this year. On April 30, he was charged under Article 206.3.2 of the Criminal Code (smuggling – when committed by a group of individuals acting in prearranged collaboration).

Several international organizations, including the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Embassy, have called on the Azerbaijani government to immediately release Anar Mammadli and other unjustly imprisoned individuals.

Anar Mammadli is the head of a non-governmental organization specializing in electoral rights in Azerbaijan. He is the author of critical reports on elections.

Anar Mammadli was awarded the Václav Havel Prize at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) fall session on September 29, 2014.

Detention period of Imran Aliyev extended

On November 18, the Khatai District Court **extended** the detention period of Imran Aliyev, the head of the "Majlis.info" website, for an **additional 3 months**.⁵

³ <https://turan.az/en/politics/term-of-arrest-of-anar-mammadli-extended-for-another-3-months-787200>

⁴ <https://turan.az/en/politics/court-keeps-anar-mammadli-in-custody-787482>

⁵ <https://turan.az/en/politics/court-prolongs-imran-aliyevs-arrest-term-787130>

Imran Aliyev and his attorney protested the submission, stating that it was unfounded and requested its rejection. The head of the website claimed that his arrest was politically motivated due to his public activities. He also brought attention to his health issues, stating that he was suffering from severe pain and could not receive the necessary medical treatment when required. According to him, he had lost approximately 15 kilograms. Imran Aliyev appeared weak and fatigued during the court session.

The investigator from the Baku City Main Police Department present at the court session defended the submission, requesting an extension of Imran Aliyev's detention. The investigator stated that the investigation is ongoing and many investigative actions still need to be carried out. He argued that it would not be appropriate for Imran Aliyev to remain at liberty during this time, citing the possibility of him evading investigation or influencing witnesses.

The judge upheld the submission and extended Imran Aliyev's detention until February 19 for the duration of the investigation. Although an appeal was filed against the court's decision, the appeal was rejected.

Imran Aliyev was detained on April 18 at Heydar Aliyev International Airport. He is charged under Article 206.3.1 of the Criminal Code (smuggling – when committed repeatedly) and Article 206.3.2 (smuggling – when committed by a group of individuals acting in prearranged collaboration). The journalist rejects the charges, considering them a political order.

Investigator's detention period also extended

On November 4, the Sabail District Court reviewed the motion to replace the detention of Iqbal Abilov, a researcher of the history of the Talish ethnic minority, with house arrest. However, the court **rejected** the motion⁶.

Although an appeal was filed against the decision, it was rejected.

On November 19, the Sabail District Court **granted the investigator's motion** to extend Iqbal Abilov's detention for an additional 4 months.⁷

On November 25, the Baku Court of Appeal reviewed the appeal against the decision to extend Iqbal Abilov's detention and rejected the appeal.

Iqbal Abilov was detained on July 22.⁸ He is charged under Article 274 of the Criminal Code (treason), Article 281.3 (open calls against the state under the direction of foreign organizations or their representatives), and Article 283.1 (incitement of national, racial, social, or religious hatred and hostility).

The State Security Service has not issued an official statement regarding the detention of the investigator. However, according to claims on local websites, Abilov is accused of treason for allegedly residing in a third country, executing tasks for a foreign intelligence agency, and engaging in actions aimed at inciting ethnic hatred and hostility in Azerbaijan.

⁶ <https://turan.az/en/politics/the-court-refused-to-transfer-igbal-abilov-to-house-arrest-786545>

⁷ <https://turan.az/en/politics/pretrial-detention-of-igbal-abilov-extended-for-another-4-months-787161>

⁸ <https://turan.az/en/politics/igbal-abilov-talysh-activist-detained>

His relatives believe that Igbal Abilov was detained on fabricated charges and that the real reason for his persecution is his research on various ethnic minorities, including the Talish people living in Azerbaijan.

The 35-year-old Igbal Abilov is one of the founders of the Talish researchers' group "Talish National Academy," which was registered in Riga in 2010. The aim of the Talish National Academy is to study and research the Talish language from social-economic, historical, ethnographic, archaeological, literary, and linguistic perspectives. Igbal Abilov is also the editor-in-chief of the "Talish National Academy News." The website features Talish folklore samples, unpublished historical documents related to the Talish, and works by early researchers that were previously unpublished.

Detention of former diplomat extended

On November 19, the Nizami District Court extended the initial detention period of former diplomat Emin Ibrahimov for an additional 2 months⁹.

The defense considers the court's decision to be unfounded. According to the attorney, no investigative actions have been carried out regarding Ibrahimov, and there has been no confrontation with the person he allegedly stabbed.

During the court hearing, Ibrahimov stated that he did not expect justice from the legal system, as the expert examination reportedly found his fingerprints on a knife he had never seen.

The defense will appeal the decision to extend Ibrahimov's detention.

Emin Ibrahimov was detained on July 22. He is charged under Article 126.2.4 (intentional grievous bodily harm with hooligan intent) and Article 221 (hooliganism) of the Azerbaijani Criminal Code, with a potential prison sentence of up to 11 years.

On July 24, the court sentenced him to 4 months of detention. As a protest, Ibrahimov declared a hunger strike, believing that the real reason for his detention was his criticism of the government.

Emin Ibrahimov previously worked in the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From 2012 to 2016, he served as the second secretary at Azerbaijan's embassy in the United States, and from 2016 to 2020, he was Azerbaijan's chargé d'affaires in Uruguay. He later resigned from diplomatic service due to disagreements with government policies.

After that, he gained attention on social media for criticizing the government and making more anti-Russian statements.

Media expert not granted house arrest

⁹ <https://turan.az/az/siyaset/kecmis-diplomat-emin-ibrahimovun-hebs-muddeti-daha-2-ay-uzadilib-787151>

On November 27, the Khatai District Court **rejected the request** for house arrest filed by Alasgar Mammadli, the founder of "Toplum TV" and media expert.¹⁰

The court session was held online.

After a phone conversation with Alasgar Mammadli, his brother Nasimi Mammadli stated that Alasgar had said in court that the health issues he is facing cannot be resolved through treatment.

"Especially the tumor growing on his thyroid gland requires urgent surgery. Due to the choking sensation, his sleep pattern has been disrupted. His blood pressure is constantly high, and he suffers from severe headaches. Even when examined at the detention center, doctors recommended surgery, but it cannot be performed there," Nasimi Mammadli noted.

Alasgar also added that his release for house arrest would not hinder the investigation.

"It is not in my character or actions to evade or obstruct the investigation," he stated.

Between March 6-8, 9 employees of "Toplum TV" and its partner organization, the Institute for Democratic Initiatives, were detained. They are accused of currency smuggling. Seven of them were placed under pretrial detention, and two were placed under police supervision.

Alasgar Mammadli is also charged with currency smuggling.

Activist sentenced to 3 years in prison

On November 28, the Baku Serious Crimes Court concluded the trial of activist Zeka Miraghayev, who was accused of the illegal circulation of narcotic substances. The court **sentenced the activist to 3 years in prison.**¹¹

In his final statement, the activist once again rejected the charges against him. Miraghayev stated that after his detention, he was subjected to torture and, under physical pressure, made false confessions. According to him, the narcotics were placed in his pocket.

Miraghayev also mentioned that the court did not conduct an objective investigation and even refused to request the video footage from the 9th Police Station of the Sabail District Police Department in Baku, which would show his time there. He claimed that had the footage been reviewed, it would have clarified what happened to him at the police station.

Miraghayev noted that he is being persecuted for criticizing the illegal actions of the police. The prosecutor had requested a sentence of 7.5 years of imprisonment for Miraghayev. However, the defense asked for his acquittal.

The court reclassified the charge from Article 234.4.3 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan (illegal circulation of narcotics for the purpose of sale, when committed in a large quantity) to Article 234.1-1 (illegal acquisition, possession, preparation, processing, or

¹⁰ <https://turan.az/en/politics/court-denies-release-of-toplum-tv-founder-alaskar-mammadli-under-house-arrest-787575>

¹¹ <https://www.amerikaninsesi.org/a/7879902.html>

transportation of narcotics or psychotropic substances in a considerable amount without the intent to sell) and sentenced Miraghayev to 3 years of imprisonment.

Miraghayev was detained on October 11, 2023. The Sabail District Court initially sentenced him to 4 months in detention, and since then, his detention period has been extended multiple times.

Miraghayev's family associates his arrest with an open letter in which he criticized the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.