

President of Azerbaijan
Ilham Aliyev
19 Istiqlaliyyat Street Baku AZ1066
Azerbaijan

Dear President,

I am writing to call for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience, human rights lawyer and reporter Elchin Mammad.

Police arrested Elchin Mammad in his house in the city of Sumgait on 30 March, a few days after he had published online a critical report on the human rights situation in Azerbaijan. They claimed that stolen jewellery had been found in Elchin Mammad's office and took him to the Sumgait city police station. According to his lawyer, Elchin Mammad believes police had planted stolen jewellery in his office, while searching it in his absence. On 31 March, the Sumgait Court remanded Elchin Mammad in custody for three months as a criminal suspect.

For years, Elchin Mammad has faced harassment from the authorities in connection with his human rights work. In 2015, his organization was investigated, he was subjected to arbitrary detention, placed under travel restrictions and repeatedly summoned by police for questioning.

The new criminal proceedings against Elchin Mammad have been once again instigated under trumped up charges, in retaliation for his human rights work and critical reporting. They are another example of the Azerbaijani authorities' continuing relentless crackdown on all dissent and must stop.

In light of the above, I urge you to:

Take all necessary steps to ensure Elchin Mammad's immediate and unconditional release and an end to his unfounded prosecution,

Ensure that the ongoing abuse of the country's criminal justice system for persecution of government critics stops.

Yours sincerely,