

**President of Azerbaijan**  
**His Excellency Ilham Aliyev**  
**Presidential Palace**  
**19 Istiqlaliyyat St,**  
**Baku AZ1066,**  
**Republic of Azerbaijan**

**Brussels, 22 June 2015**

**Re: Concerns regarding the sentencing of Mr Intigam Aliyev, a human rights lawyer**

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has associate and observer representatives from a further thirteen European countries' bars.

The CCBE places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE would like to express once more its concerns regarding the situation of Mr Intigam Aliyev, a human rights lawyer and the head of the Legal Education Society. Mr Aliyev has submitted more than 200 applications to the European Court of Human Rights. He was also awarded the *Homo Homini Award* by the international organisation, People in Need, in recognition of his commitment to defending human rights. The CCBE previously wrote to you on 14 August 2014 and 22 January 2015 regarding the case of Mr Aliyev.

On 8 August 2014, Mr Aliyev was summoned for an interrogation by the Serious Crimes Investigation Department of the General Prosecutor's Office in Baku to investigate claims of tax evasion (under article 213.1 of the Criminal Code), illegal enterprise (article 192.2.2) and abuse of official power (article 308.2). The authorities transferred him to Baku for pre-trial where he was officially charged. His pre-trial detention was extended despite the deterioration of his health, due in part to conditions of his detention. Furthermore, the human rights defender faced restrictions of his private correspondence, with communications between Mr Aliyev and his lawyers having been continuously monitored by the detention facility's employees. In addition, four out of the five lawyers representing him had been removed from the case.

It has now been brought to our attention that on 22 April 2015, Mr Aliyev was sentenced to 7 years and 6 months in prison and a 3-year ban from certain positions and activities. According to our information, he was found guilty on the charges of misappropriation, illegal business by an organised group, tax evasion, abuse of official power and falsifying data in official documents.

The CCBE believes that the sentencing of Mr Aliyev is a result of his peaceful and legitimate activities as a human rights lawyer. We are alarmed by these facts, which indicate a repressive environment for human rights lawyers in Azerbaijan.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Principles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

*Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.*

Furthermore, Article 23 states that:

*Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.*

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to take immediate and effective steps to release Mr Aliyev, guarantee his physical and psychological integrity and drop all charges brought against him. The CCBE further requests that you take all necessary measures to guarantee that lawyers in Azerbaijan are able to conduct their professional duties without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in order to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice.

I look forward to hearing from your Excellency urgently.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maria ŚLAZAK', written in a cursive style.

Maria ŚLAZAK  
President