



COVID-19 and Azerbaijan. Cases of political persecution since the first months of pandemic Azerbaijan applied quarantine regime to combat the spread of the coronavirus infection since the mid-March. In his Novruz holiday address, President Ilham Aliyev announced the need for the system of relations in which the isolation of the opposition forces may become a necessity.¹

On March 22, the parked car of Tofiq Yagublu, member of Musavat Party and National Council of Democratic Forces, was hit by another car belonging to Elkhan Jabrayilov. Tofiq Yagublu posted about the incident on his 'Facebook' page alarming provocation against him. Despite Yagublu called the police, the official statement afterwards stated that the car crash occurred because of the mistake of Yagublu and he attacked the Elkhan and his wife Javahir Jabrayilov and caused bodily injuries. The incident was considered as provocation by independent observers.

The mobile and broadband connections of the chairperson of Azerbaijan Popular Front Party, Ali Karimli and his family members were cut since the April 13. The chairperson could not recover the connections with new equipments as well and regarded the move as politically motivated. The political persecution included the visitors of Ali Karimli as well whereas in one occasion journalist Teymur Karimov was detained by people in plain clothes after the interview with Karimli after which the equipments of the journalist was confiscated.

Another PFPA member Agil Humbatov was forcibly put into Psychiatric Hospital No.1 after he was detained for the second time during the March for criticising president and his social policies on his 'Facebook' account. He was long denied access to legal aid and considered the move as politically motivated during his meeting with lawyer. He was released from the hospital after the prolongation of his term twice.

Pandemic in Azerbaijan was also accompanied by the torture and degrading treatment detainees faced within the campaign of political persecution. During the pandemic, young activist Fuad Ismayilov, member of Muslim Unity Union Hikmat Aghayev and Abbas Huseynov, members of PFPA Arif Babayev and Niyamaddin Ahmadov were reported to be tortured, severely beaten and face degrading treatment in various detention centers.

In general, after the abovementioned speech of the President a new wave of political persecution started targeting government critics and activists. In first few months of the pandemic only, at least 56 people faced one or another form of the political pressure. 6 people were launched criminal cases against them whereas 33 people faced administrative punishments and arrests.

¹ Eurasianet, 'Azerbaijan's president suggests coronavirus may require a crackdown on opposition', <https://eurasianet.org/azerbajians-president-suggests-coronavirus-may-require-a-crackdown-on-opposition>

Check the annex for detailed information on people targeted during the political persecution campaign.

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Annex

Annex 1: Political activists and government critics who faced political pressure since announcement of quarantine regime in relation with COVID-19 pandemic.

#	Name Surname	Public Profile / Political Affiliation	Form of Political Pressure Faced	Date
1	Anar Malikov	Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan (PFPA hereinafter)	Administrative Detention	21/03/2020
2	Tofiq Yagublu	Musavat, National Council of Democratic Forces	Pre-trial Detention	22/03/2020
3	Samir Babayev	Muslim Unity Union (MUU hereinafter)	Administrative Detention	22/03/2020
4	Elchin Mammad	Journalist, Human Rights Defender	Pre-trial Detention	30/03/2020
5	Agil Humbatov	PFPA	Forcibly put into Psychiatric Hospital	01/04/2020
6	Ulfat Hagverdiyev	Azerbaijan Democracy and Welfare Movement (ADWM hereinafter)	Fine	05/04/2020
7	Rovshan Murad	ADWM	Fine	05/04/2020
8	Mahabbat Murad	ADWM	Threat	05/04/2020
9	Shakir Mammadli	ADWM	Administrative Detention	06/04/2020
10	Vefadar Aliyev	ADWM	Administrative Detention	08/04/2020
11	Natig Isbatov	Video-blogger/Journalist	Administrative Detention	09/04/2020
12	Nariman Abdulla	Activist	Administrative Detention	10/04/2020
13	Fikrat Jafarli	Classic Popular Front Party	Fine	10/04/2020
14	Namizad Safarov	Lawyer	Fine	10/04/2020
15	Nijat Abdullazada	PFPA	Administrative Detention	10/04/2020
16	Ibrahim Vazirov	Journalist	Administrative Detention	12/04/2020
17	Baba Suleymanov	PFPA	Administrative Detention	13/04/2020
18	Ali Karimli	PFPA	Blockage of Internet and Mobile Connections	13/04/2020
19	Vugar Abilli	PFPA	Administrative Detention	16/04/2020
20	Islam Islamzade	PFPA	Administrative Detention	17/04/2020
21	Teymur Karimli	Journalist	Illegal Detention, Confiscation of Equipment	20/04/2020

22	Arif Babayev	PFPA	Administrative Detention, Ill-treatment	22/04/2020
23	Avaz Ahmadov	PFPA	Administrative Detention	22/04/2020
24	Shamsi Kasamanli	PFPA	Administrative Detention	25/04/2020
25	Irada Nariman	PFPA	Fine	28/04/2020
26	Elshan Babayev	PFPA	Administrative Detention	28/04/2020
27	Elvin Mammadov	PFPA	Administrative Detention	02/05/2020
28	Namid Nagiyev	PFPA	Administrative Detention	07/05/2020
29	Ali Imamkhanli	PFPA	Administrative Detention	09/05/2020
30	Elkhan Aliyev	PFPA	Administrative Detention	09/05/2020
31	Jeyhun Rzayev	PFPA	Administrative Detention	09/05/2020
32	Said Mammadzada	PFPA	Pre-trial Detention	16/05/2020
33	Babak Hasanov	PFPA	Discrimanotry Treatment, Hunger Strike	17/05/2020
34	Elvin Irshadov	Activist	Administrative Detention	19/05/2020
35	Jelal Zabitov	D18	Pre-trial Detention	22/05/2020
36	Ruslan Izzatli	D18	Forcibly Conscripted Inaccordance with Laws, Kicked off the office	25/05/2020
37	Abbas Huseynov	MUU	Ill-treatment, Hunger Strike, Discriminatory Treatment	29/05/2020
38	Elshan Teymurov	Rapper	Administrative Detention	02/06/2020
39	Giyas Ibrahim	Activist	Fine	09/06/2020
40	Alik Aslanov	MUU	Administrative Detention	10/06/2020
41	Shamil Hasanov	MUU	Pre-trial Detention	22/06/2020
42	Firdovsi Amrahov	PFPA	Illegally Detained and Released	25/06/2020
43	Faig Rashidov	PFPA	Administrative Detention	26/06/2020
44	Javid Mammadzada	Activist	Fine	26/06/2020
45	Elshad Atayev	Musavat	Administrative Detention	27/06/2020
46	Alixan Rajabli	PFPA	Held in incommunicado	04/07/2020
47	Gachay Gafarov	PFPA	Administrative Detention	05/07/2020
48	Arif Paşayev	PFPA	Administrative Detention	13/07/2020
49	Elvin Bəhmənoğlu	PFPA	Administrative Detention	14/07/2020
50	Ilkin Rustamzada	Nida Civic Movement	Attempt to Arrest, Online Blackmailing Campaign, Cyber Attacks	08 April, 23 May
51	Faig Amirli	PFPA	Administrative Detention	08 April, 25 May
52	Hikmat Aghayev	MUU	Fine, Administrative Detention, Torture	10, 13 April 2020

53	Niyamaddin Ahmadov	PFPA	Administrative Detention, Torture, Pre-Trial Detention	16 April, 19 May
54	Saadat Jahangir	Journalist / PFPA	Fine, Confiscation of Equipment	28 April, 1 May
55	Fuad Ismayilov	Activist	Administrative Detention, Torture	7 March ,22 May, 21 June
56	Ruslan Amirli	PFPA	Administrative Detention	9 April, 29 May