

Network of Concerned Historians (NCH)				
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2011		67	Azerbaijan	<i>Jabbar Savalan</i>
	2012			<i>follow-up 1</i>

Announcement

On 27 December 2011, Amnesty International reported that history student Jabbar Savalan was released. No further action is needed at this moment. Thanks to all who sent appeals. Below you will find:

- * A link to the original NCH campaign.
- * A NCH summary of the case.
- * Amnesty International's press release.



LINK TO THE ORIGINAL NCH CAMPAIGN:

<http://www.concernedhistorians.org/ca/67.pdf>



NCH SUMMARY OF THE CASE:

On 5 February 2011, history student **Jabbar Savalan (Jabbar Savalanli)** ([1991–]) was arrested when returning home from a meeting of the opposition Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (APFP) in Sumgayit. He was interrogated for two days without access to a lawyer and reportedly slapped and threatened until he signed a confession that he used drugs— despite a blood test showing that he had not. According to Savalan, the drugs were planted on him by the police. On 4 May 2011, he was convicted of possessing illegal drugs for personal use and sentenced to 2,5 years' imprisonment. On 26 July 2011, the Sumgayit appeal court and on 29 November 2011, the Azerbaijan Supreme Court upheld this decision. The real reason was widely believed to be his peaceful anti-government activism. His activities included using the *Facebook* website to share a newspaper article criticizing President Ilham Aliyev, and calling for calling for Egypt-inspired anti-government protests. On 26 December 2011, Savalan was released under a pardon decree issued by President Ilham Aliyev.

Sources: Amnesty International, *The Wire* (October/November 2011), 41, no. 5, Insert; Amnesty International, “Jailed Azerbaijani youth activist freed—Press release (27 December 2011); Institute for Reporters’ Freedom and Safety, *Ifex Alert* (29 December 2011).



Amnesty International: Jailed Azerbaijani youth activist freed

Press release (27 December 2011)—AI Index: PRE01/647/2011

The release of 20 year old youth activist Jabbar Savalan is an important step, but Azerbaijani authorities must release 16 more prisoners of conscience jailed in April following a series of peaceful protests, Amnesty International said today.

Jabbar Savalan was released last night after he received a presidential pardon.

“The release of a prisoner of conscience is always a cause for celebration but it is important that Jabbar Savalan’s conviction is also quashed and his reputation restored,” said John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for Europe and Central Asia.

“This release is an important first step - but there are still 16 more prisoners of conscience dating from the same spring protests languishing in jail. Their release is imperative for the cause of justice in Azerbaijan.”

Jabbar Savalan’s case was part of Amnesty International’s annual December Letter Writing Marathon, during which hundreds of thousands of people in more than 80 countries take action to demand that people’s rights are respected. Over one million appeals were made as part of the 2011 marathon prior to Jabbar Savalan’s release.

“It feels good to be with my friends again. I feel good now that I can spend time with them and my family,” Jabbar Savalan told Amnesty International last night on his release.

“Amnesty International is a symbol of human rights and freedom, not just in Azerbaijan, but everywhere in the world. I am grateful for all the hard work done by your organisation and other organizations which fight for freedom in Azerbaijan.”

Jabbar Savalan was arrested and accused of drugs possession on 5 February, a day after he posted on Facebook calling for Egypt-inspired protests against the government. He was convicted despite a

blood test showing that he had not used drugs, largely on the basis of a confession extracted under duress while he was denied access to a lawyer.

In March and April, hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets to protest against government corruption and to call for fair elections and respect for human rights.

A report released by Amnesty International in November, Azerbaijan: The Spring that Never Blossomed, documents how hundreds of protestors were arrested and 17 who called for or allegedly organized the protests sentenced to long prison terms in unfair trials.

Jabbar Savalan told Amnesty International that his arrest has only strengthened his resolve to fight for the basic rights denied him by the Azerbaijani authorities.

“We will not be scared off by imprisonment or punishment. They may arrest us, but they can’t break us. Freedom of speech is our right, as it is the right of everyone. We will continue our struggle” he said.

In May 2012 the international spotlight will fall on Azerbaijan as it hosts the 2012 Eurovision song contest. Azerbaijani activists are using this opportunity to focus the world’s attention on the authorities’ human rights abuses, supported by Amnesty International.

French version: <http://www.amnesty.org/fr/for-media/press-releases/jailed-azerbaijani-youth-activist-freed-2011-12-27>