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Azerbaijan: the repressive side of the European Olympic Games

Event at the 29th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council
16 June 2015, 11:00 – 13:00
Room XVII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Live webcast on
www.peopleinneed.cz & www.azadliq.org

Event held together with an exhibition by People in Need on
detained civil society leaders in Azerbaijan

Speakers:

Dinara Yunus

Daughter of detained human rights defenders Leyla and Arif Yunus

Idrak Abbasov

Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS)

Gulnara Akhundova

International Media Support

Moderation by **Florian Irminger** *Human Rights House Foundation*

Remarks:

Michel Forst

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Maina Kiai (TBC)

Special Rapporteur on rights to freedom of assembly and association

David Kaye (TBC)

Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression

Recent years brought an intensified crackdown on the exercise of fundamental human rights in Azerbaijan that has shocked even seasoned observers. Without any regard for protections under domestic or international law, the authorities in Azerbaijan have targeted journalists, political opposition leaders, grassroots activists, and human rights defenders, including lawyers. Central to the government's strategy to suppress criticism is the employment of politically-motivated criminal prosecutions and detentions. To do so, it has repeatedly amended its legislation since 2009 in order to restrict rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. As a result, civil society in the country has been devastated.

Leading figures of civil society have fled the country, are forced into hiding such as IRFS' Emin Huseynov or have been detained, such as amongst many others human rights lawyer Intigam Aliyev, human rights defenders Rasul Jafarov, Leyla Yunus, and her husband Arif Yunus, independent election observer Anar Mammadli, investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova, opposition leader Ilgar Mammadov, as well as NIDA activists.

Commencing on 12 June, Azerbaijan will host the inaugural European Olympic Games. Our event at the Human Rights Council will shine light on the severe restrictions on fundamental freedoms and the imprisonment of civil society, which risks turning these European Olympics into a sad symbol of repression.

Refreshments and Russian/English interpretation provided

Organised by Human Rights House Network, International Media Support, and People in Need

Co-sponsored by Amnesty International, Article 19, Civicus, Civil Rights Defenders, Freedom Now, Front Line Defenders, Human Rights Watch, International Partnership for Human Rights, International Service for Human Rights, National Endowment for Democracy, Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (joint programme of FIDH and OMCT), and Platform

Azerbaijani NGOs endorsing this event are not cited for security reasons

