

Joint civil society statement
Marking two years since the unlawful arrest of Dr. Gubad Ibadoghlu
23 July 2025

Today marks two years since Dr. Gubad Ibadoghlu, a prominent economist, anti-corruption expert, and human rights defender, was arrested and detained by the Azerbaijani authorities. Through his work, Dr. Ibadoghlu has exposed corruption in Azerbaijan's oil and gas sector, called for transparency of the country's public revenues, and advocated for the recovery of assets stolen from Azerbaijan and its people. He has been active in prominent civil society and multi-stakeholder networks for many years, including the UNCAC Coalition, Publish What You Pay (PWYP), the Natural Resource Governance Institute, the Open Government Partnership (OGP), and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

Dr. Ibadoghlu and his wife were brutally beaten and arrested by police in Azerbaijan on 23 July 2023. Though his wife was released, Dr. Ibadoghlu remained detained, without due process, on unsubstantiated charges of money counterfeiting and connection to terrorism. He suffered inhumane and degrading treatment in a pretrial detention facility for nine months until, yielding to international pressure, authorities transferred him to house arrest in Baku in April 2024.

Despite international calls for his release by the European Union, governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society coalitions, and other stakeholders, Dr. Ibadoghlu remains under house arrest and in deteriorating health. He has lived under constant surveillance. His pre-trial proceedings were indefinitely suspended on 29 July 2024, despite the charges against him remaining unsubstantiated. Some of Dr. Ibadoghlu's family members have also been targeted. In an apparent act of retaliation for speaking out about Dr. Ibadoghlu's arbitrary detention, the authorities have also opened a criminal case against his brother, Galib Bayramov.

The Azerbaijani government's persecution of Dr. Ibadoghlu and his family is part of a long-standing, systematic effort to silence critics and repress free and independent civil society generally. Indeed, the human rights situation in the country has only worsened in the two years since Dr. Ibadoghlu's arrest, as President Ilham Aliyev's regime escalates attacks on activists of various backgrounds, human rights defenders, and other civil society actors. The number of political prisoners in Azerbaijan has reached a new high of 375, according to the Union for the Freedom for Political Prisoners in Azerbaijan. They include journalists, who face growing threats in an increasingly hostile media environment. The last independent, Azerbaijani media outlet was [forced to halt](#) its operations in February 2025 and [foreign outlets](#) are under increasing [restrictions](#). The government has further abused its legal and [regulatory](#) powers to close civic space. Human Rights Watch [reports](#) that the Azerbaijani authorities recently re-opened a 2014 investigation targeting "international donors and their grantees that operated in Azerbaijan with bogus charges

of tax evasion, illegal entrepreneurship, and other accusations stemming from Azerbaijan's prohibitive rules on grants".

The organizations and individuals listed below renew their urgent call on the government of Azerbaijan to immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Ibadoghlu and provide the medical care he desperately needs. We also express our grave concern for all human rights defenders, anti-corruption advocates, whistleblowers, journalists, and other members of civil society who have been arbitrarily detained or are threatened by government authorities in Azerbaijan. We urge the Azerbaijani government to fully comply with its obligations under international law to respect human rights, including by releasing political prisoners and protecting freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association.

Endorsed by:

Crude Accountability

Freedom Now

Hawkmoth

Human Rights Foundation

Natural Resource Governance Institute

Publish What You Pay

Transparency International Georgia

UK Anti-Corruption Coalition

UNCAC Coalition