

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 8, 2015

His Excellency Ilham Aliyev  
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
c/o Embassy of Azerbaijan  
2741 34th Street Northwest  
Washington, DC 20008

Dear President Aliyev:

I write to express my deep concern over the raid of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's bureau in Baku on December 26, 2014, and the forced closure of the RFE/RL bureau premises by Azerbaijani officials. This represents the most recent incident in a long-term harassment campaign against independent media outlets and nongovernmental organizations operating in Azerbaijan, as well as a flagrant violation of Azerbaijan's commitments to uphold international standards, rule of law, and respect for human rights.

This targeted attack by members of the Azerbaijani Prosecutor's Office and police on a free and independent media outlet follows months of raids on other international assistance providers including the nongovernmental organizations IREX and the National Democratic Institute, which were also forced to cease operations in Azerbaijan. Further, the raid on RFE/RL's Baku Bureau comes just three weeks after the politically-motivated incarceration of Khadija Ismayilova, an investigative journalist and RFE/RL contributor, which Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have deemed part of a broader campaign to shut down all forms of independent media. Ms. Ismayilova now joins the ranks of 100+ political prisoners in Azerbaijan, including Leyla Yunus, the Director of the Institute of Peace and Democracy and a vocal critic of Azerbaijan's human rights record.

Azerbaijan's crackdown on the media, civil society, and all forms of nonviolent political dissent is a serious impediment to progress in the U.S.-Azerbaijan bilateral relationship. I urge you to condemn the December 26th raid of RFE/RL's Baku Bureau by members of the Azerbaijan Prosecutor's Office and allow RFE/RL's bureau and employees to resume their regular journalistic activities. Further, I call on you to release Ms. Ismayilova, Ms. Yunus, and the other 100+ political prisoners currently imprisoned in your country.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator