



FREEDOM NOW

Freedom Now Supports Azerbaijan Human Rights Resolution

Freedom Now applauds U.S. Representatives Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Jim McGovern (D-MA) for introducing [House Resolution 537](#) entitled “Promoting United States national security and foreign policy objectives through consolidation and strengthening of the rule of law and respect for human rights in the Republic of Azerbaijan.”

The resolution, introduced yesterday, addresses the ongoing human rights violations and civil society crackdown in Azerbaijan. It takes note of several troubling developments, including the repression of religious organizations, government actions intended to dismantle independent media, and the limits placed on freedom of expression, association, and assembly. It also calls on Azerbaijan to immediately release all political prisoners, lift travel bans, and cease harassment, intimidation, and mistreatment of citizens engaged in political speech, independent journalism, and other forms of advocacy on behalf of government accountability, democratic values, and universally-recognized human rights.

“We believe that this resolution is a powerful statement to the Government of Azerbaijan,” said Freedom Now Executive Director Maran Turner. “Recent actions by the government, including the brazen abduction of journalist Afgan Mukhtarli from neighboring Georgia, have not gone unnoticed by the international community. We are grateful that Rep. Smith and Rep. McGovern have chosen to formally condemn Azerbaijan for its disregard of internationally protected human rights.”

Since 2011, Azerbaijan has detained more than 100 human rights defenders, political opposition leaders, civil society leaders, religious activists, lawyers, and journalists. Many of these prisoners have already been convicted and received lengthy prison terms, including Ilgar Mammadov, an opposition politician sentenced to seven years in 2013, and remains in prison despite a judgment by the European Court of Human Rights deeming his detention arbitrary and politically motivated.