



Intigam Aliyev **Azerbaijan**

Intigam Aliyev is one of Azerbaijan's most prominent human rights lawyers. He was sentenced to seven and one-half years on charges of tax evasion, illegal business activity, and abuse of authority.

Before his arrest on August 8, 2014, Aliyev headed the Legal Education Society, an organization founded in 1998 that both promotes awareness of the law and provides legal support to individuals and organizations in Azerbaijan. As a human rights lawyer for two decades, Aliyev submitted cases to the European Court of Human Rights, trained other lawyers, and spoke abroad about the lack of rule of law in Azerbaijan. He was held in high esteem by international human rights groups. Shortly before his arrest, Aliyev spoke during an event at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in which he publicly criticized Azerbaijan's human rights record and authorities' persistent use of arbitrary detention.

Aliyev was arrested following a string of other arrests of high profile human rights defenders, some of whom face similar charges. The government charged Aliyev under the Criminal Code on fabricated charges of tax evasion (Article 213), illegal business activities (Article 192), and abuse of authority (Article 308.2).

The court convicted Aliyev on April 22, 2015 and sentenced him to seven and one-half years in prison. The trial was marred by several irregularities, including attempts by the court to bar independent observers from attending the proceedings and the withholding of key pieces of evidence introduced by the prosecution and relied on by the court.

In recognition of his work on cases involving the right to vote, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and criminal due process, Intigam received the 2012 Homo Homini Award from the Czech organization People in Need. In 2014, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee awarded him its Andrei Sakharov Award along with fellow activists Anar Mammadli, Rasul Jafarov, and Leyla Yunus. In October 2015, he received the Human Rights Award from the International Bar Association.

Freedom Now brought international attention to Aliyev's case by preparing [**u a third-party intervention**](#) with the European Court of Human Rights, joining in [**multiple letters**](#) with NGO partners through Sport for Rights and other coalitions, joining in [**a letter to then-Secretary of State John Kerry**](#), issuing a [**comprehensive report on the legal strategy**](#) the government used against Aliyev and his fellow activists, facilitating a [**letter from law students**](#) to Azerbaijan's Ambassador to the US, preparing a report to the UN Human Rights Council prior to Azerbaijan's [**universal periodic review**](#), and publishing an op-ed in the [**Houston Chronicle**](#).

In July 2015, [**16 U.S. Senators sent a letter**](#) to the President of Azerbaijan requesting Aliyev's release.

In October 2015, Aliyev was honored by the International Bar Association with their [**2015 Human Rights Award**](#).

On March 28, 2016, the [**Supreme Court of Azerbaijan commuted Aliyev's sentence**](#) to a five year suspended sentence.