Azerbaijan Republic,

Baku,

Az 1066, Istiqlaliyyat Street 19,

Presidential Palace,

President Iiham Aliyer, 2012-09-26

Dear President

I am writing to you to express my very deep concern regarding the apparent targeting of a number of individuals for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

I welcome the release on 22 June of nine people considered by Amnesty International to have been prisoners of conscience. However, these individuals should never have been imprisoned in the first place, and I remain concerned that five prisoners of conscience are still in jail. I urge you to ensure that Vidadi Isganderov, Shahin Hasanli, Ramin Bayramov, Anar Bayrimli, and Taleh Khasmammadov are also released immediately and unconditionally.

Furthermore, I am concerned to learn that Amnesty International considers that one of those released on 22 June, Tural Abbasli, has been expelled from university and targeted for military service because of his political activities. I urge that Tural Abbasli be reinstated at university and released from military service immediately.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my concern regarding journalist and pro-democracy activist Mehman Huseynov, who I understand is facing up to five years in jail following his arrest on 12 June 2012 on charges of ‘hooliganism’. This is despite eyewitnesses contradicting police claims that he committed acts of violence. It appears that Mehman has been targeted for highlighting abuses during the recent Eurovision Song Contest.

I call on you to ensure that the charges against Mehman Husyenov are dropped immediately, and that the harassment and persecution of activists for exercising their right to freedom of expression in the aftermath of the Eurovision Song Contest is ended.

I offer my thanks to you, for your urgent attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,