

Solidarity Statement from the Labor Desk Confederation of Trade Unions in Azerbaijan

We, the Labor Desk Confederation of Trade Unions in Azerbaijan, denounce in the strongest terms the politically motivated imprisonment of our chairman, **Afiaddin Mammadov**, alongside our comrades **Aykhan Israfilov**, **Elvin Mustafayev**, and **Mohyaddin Orujov**. These arrests are not isolated injustices but part of a broader, systematic assault on the labor movement in Azerbaijan, designed to crush any independent resistance to capitalist exploitation and state repression.

The so-called “official” trade unions in Azerbaijan exist only as an extension of the regime, while offering no real support to workers. The Azerbaijani state, ruled by the authoritarian regime and their complete ownership of all of the resources and labor of its people, has embraced the brutal forms of neoliberal exploitation, where workers are subjected to precarious conditions, poverty wages, and complete disregard for their rights. Any effort to organize independently—any attempt to reclaim dignity and power from the oligarchic elite—is met with ruthless suppression. Our union, the Labor Desk Confederation, stands as a direct challenge to this system of exploitation, which is precisely why our comrades have been targeted.

Founded in March 2022 by a group of labor rights activists, our Confederation has provided free legal support, raised public awareness of rampant worker exploitation, and helped workers, specifically the gig workers and the precarious service workers, organize against the tyranny of bosses and the state. Our chairman, Afiaddin Mammadov, has fearlessly coordinated these struggles, fighting for fair treatment, safe working conditions, and the collective power of the working class. With his active participation, we have staged protests, disrupted the silence around labor exploitation, and built a movement that refuses to be silenced.

For this, **Afiaddin** has faced repeated persecution. On September 20, 2023, he was abducted near his home in Baku and falsely charged with premeditated harm and hooliganism. His trial was a sham, filled with procedural violations and blatant disregard for due process. On January 14, 2025, the state **sentenced him to eight years in prison**¹—a calculated move to break our movement. But we refuse to be broken.

Our comrades **Aykhan Israfilov**, **Elvin Mustafayev**, and **Mohyaddin Orujov** have been similarly targeted. **Elvin was sentenced to three years**² in prison on 31st of January 2023, on fabricated drug charges—one of the state’s go-to tactics for silencing dissent. Later on April 2, 2024 **Aykhan was sentenced to three years**³ with similar charges. **Mohyaddin’s trial remains ongoing**⁴, but the outcome is all but decided: another predetermined sentence aimed at dismantling our movement and spreading fear among workers daring to organize.

¹ See *Annex 1* for the detailed overview of Afiaddin’s case

² See *Annex 2* for the detailed overview of Elvin’s case

³ See *Annex 3* for the detailed overview of Aykhan’s case

⁴ See *Annex 4* for the detailed overview of Mohyaddin’s case

These arrests are a direct assault on the fundamental right to organize, to resist exploitation, and to demand justice. They expose the Azerbaijani state's deep hostility toward the working class and its utter contempt for international human rights obligations. We refuse to accept this repression in silence. The struggle for labor rights in Azerbaijan is part of a global fight against capitalism, authoritarianism, and the violent suppression of workers' movements everywhere.

We call on trade unions, human rights organizations, and comrades across the world to stand with us. Our demands are clear:

- The immediate and unconditional release of Afiaddin Mammadov, Aykhan Israfilov, Elvin Mustafayev, and Mohyaddin Orujov.
- An end to the persecution of labor rights activists in Azerbaijan.
- A transparent, independent investigation into the procedural violations during our comrades' trials.

We urge all comrades to take action:

1. **Share solidarity statements** on social media using the hashtag #FreeAfiaddin, #FreeAykhan, #FreeMohyaddin, #FreeElvin and amplify the call for justice.
2. Support our **solidarity fund** for our imprisoned comrades, who are facing inhumane conditions and lack access to basic necessities.
3. **Reach out to us to coordinate further actions** and strengthen our collective struggle against oppression.

We will not be silenced. We will not back down. The power of the workers will prevail.

For further information or to collaborate on advocacy efforts, contact us:

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**In solidarity and struggle,
Labor Desk Confederation of Trade Unions**

See annexes below

Annex 1: Afiaddin Mammadov's case

Afiaddin Mammadov has been administratively arrested multiple times before due to his activism since 2022. His first administrative arrest was on [November 11, 2022](#). On his way home, the activist was stopped by police officers and was sentenced to 30 days of administrative detention by court decision. Later on [12th of February 2023](#), he was sentenced to 30 days of administrative detention after participating in the demonstration held in front of the Baku Court of Appeal regarding the arrest of activist Bakhtiyar Hajiyev.

On [1st of August 2023](#) Afiaddin was seized by civilian operatives from Baku City Police Department, following the couriers demonstration. His detention was mostly due to the courier strike held as a protest against the "Law on Road Traffic" which mandates that motorcycles capable of exceeding 50 km/h must have a registration plate and the rider must possess a driver's license. On August 2nd, the Khatai District Court incorrectly issued a 500-manat punishment on Afiaddin Mammadov in accordance with Article 528.1 of the Code of Administrative Offenses. Subsequently, the Yasamal District Court handed down a 30-day administrative imprisonment sentence based on Articles 510 and 535.1 of the Administrative Offences Code because of his political involvement.

Only 20 days after being released from administrative detention, Afiaddin was arrested near his home in Baku under fabricated charges of premeditated harm and hooliganism on [September 20, 2023](#). As Afiaddin was leaving his house, someone approached him and injured themselves with a knife before throwing it at him. Suddenly, the police emerged from afar and detained him as a suspect. He was charged with sections 126.2.4 (publicly dangers a way, from hooligan prompting;), 221.3 (using weapons or items used as weapons, if accompanied with application of violence against the victim, or destruction or damage of another's property) and 228.4 (Illegal purchase, selling or carrying of gas weapon, cold arms, including cold missile weapon, except for districts where carrying of a cold steel is an accessory of a national suit or connected to hunting) of the Criminal Code. His subsequent trial was riddled with procedural violations, including the refusal to consider key evidence that could prove his innocence. On [January 14, 2025](#), Afiaddin was sentenced to eight years in prison in a miscarriage of justice. This verdict is a blatant attempt to silence him and weaken the growing labor movement in Azerbaijan.

The prosecution, by imposing overlapping charges that do not need to be applied simultaneously - namely, intentional infliction of serious harm to health with the intent of hooliganism (CCA 126.2.4), committing hooliganism by using force against the victim with a weapon or an item used as a weapon (CCA 221.3), and unlawfully carrying a cold weapon (CCA 228.4) - is aiming to keep Afiaddin under pressure and secure a heavier sentence.

The second sentence of Article 4 of the Supreme Court Plenum Decision on Judicial Practice in Hooliganism Cases also emphasizes that if one article sufficiently encompasses another, there is no need to apply additional charges. Additionally, the Supreme Court's Review on Judicial Practice in Cassation of Cases on Hooliganism and Crimes Against Life and Health Committed with Hooligan Intent explicitly notes that stabbing someone during a dispute cannot be characterized as an act with hooligan intent.

In this context, it is significant that the Supreme Court did not apply Article 228.4 in non-political cases, such as case No. 1(102)-2592/2024 dated December 19, 2024, involving similar factual circumstances. Similarly, Judge Sabuhi Huseynov, who delivered a guilty

verdict against Afiaddin, classified the act only under Article 126.2.4 without applying additional articles in case No. 1(101)-1577/2024 dated May 14, 2024.

These examples suggest that the judges aggravated the charges in this case not due to a lack of professionalism but because of the political weight of the matter, and this once again proves that this was done to create grounds for keeping Afiaddin in detention for a longer time.

Annex 2: Elvin Mustafayev's case

Elvin Mustafayev - chairman of Couriers' Union (under the Labor Desk Confederation of Trade Unions) have been detained after the courier demonstration that was held on 1st of August 2023 which was against the the "Law on Road Traffic" which mandates that motorcycles capable of exceeding 50 km/h must have a registration plate and the rider must possess a driver's license. However, getting a registration plate requires a customs declaration, which sellers frequently do not provide. This problem exists because motorcycles are imported as spare parts to avoid taxes, and sellers decline to provide the required documentation.

Elvin Mustafayev, who took an active role in organizing the strike was detained on [5th of August 2023](#). Two days before, he mentioned that the police had attempted to gather information about him near his home following the protest.

[On 7th of August 2023](#), He was detained as a suspect under Article 234.4.3 of the Criminal Code (acquisition, transportation, storage of large quantities of drugs for the purpose of sale). He was sentenced to 4 months of pretrial detention. The motion filed by his lawyer for house arrest was denied.

[On 31st of January 2023](#), the investigation process of his case was completed and he was convicted under Article 234.1-1 of the Criminal Code and sentenced to 3 years in prison. In his speech, he stated that he made the confession under torture and threats. He was found guilty under Article 234.1-1 of the Criminal Code and was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment. In his statement, he claimed that his confession was coerced through torture and threats.

After his imprisonment, Elvin Mustafayev's health deteriorated significantly. Despite his condition, he was denied treatment at the Penitentiary Service's medical facility. Although he was held there from [September 20 to 28](#), he was sent back to the colony without any medical examination or care. In protest, he began a hunger strike.

On October 3, he was taken back to the medical facility, prompting him to end his hunger strike. However, after just five days, he was once again returned to the colony without receiving any treatment.

Additionally, he was denied the right to call home or meet with his family while in the hospital. When he protested, he was handcuffed, placed in a prisoner transport vehicle, and transferred to Penitentiary Facility No. 13. He continues to suffer from severe headaches.

Annex 3: Ayxan Israfilov's case

Ayxan Israfilov- board member of Labor Desk Confederation of Trade Unions was detained by civil officers of Baku City Main Police Department on 11th of August 2023 after he contributed to courier strike that was held on 1st of August 2023. Later, on [12th of August 2023](#), he was sentenced to 4 months of pretrial detention by the decision of Narimanov District Court. He said that after being detained, he was forced to give a confession under physical pressure at the Narimanov Police Department. He also stated that he is being detained under [inhumane circumstances](#). His lawyer's request for house arrest was denied, and his disability was not taken into account during the investigation process.

[On April 2, 2024](#), he was accused under Article 234.1.1 (Illegal purchase, storage, manufacturing, processing, transportation without a purpose of selling of narcotics or psychotropic substances in a quantity (amount) exceeding necessary for personal consumption) of the Criminal Code and sentenced to 3 years in prison by the decision of the Baku Court of Grave Crimes. It was also stated that no psychotropic substances were found in Aykhan Israfilov's blood. During the process, none of the motions filed by lawyer Fariz Namazli were accepted.

After being sentenced to 3 years imprisonment Aykhan's family reported that they had been unable to contact Aykhan. Later, it emerged that Aykhan had been subjected to violence in Penitentiary No. 10. According to available information, Israfilov was transferred from the Umbaki Penitentiary Institution, where he was being held, on June 29, and since then, his whereabouts had been unknown. Family members and their lawyer reached out to the Penitentiary Service for information, but were told they would only receive a response to a written request.

The family also contacted the Ombudsman, who informed them that Israfilov had been taken to Penitentiary No. 17. In their account, the family noted that on June 29, Aykhan Israfilov was brought to Penitentiary No. 10, where his belongings were inspected.

"They asked about the medication he had with him. Aykhan explained that it was for his leg, which he regularly treated. When the institution's staff attempted to confiscate the medication, Aykhan protested. In response, the staff beat him severely, slapping him 15 times and punching him once in the chest. He was then placed in a solitary confinement cell," the family reported. According to them, Israfilov was not allowed to communicate with them and was kept in inhumane conditions for 14 days.

During this period, he was not given proper food and survived on just four eggs. Aykhan lost a significant amount of weight, and could barely walk or speak. After the beating, they tried to force him to write a statement claiming he had resisted the staff during the inspection. However, Aykhan refused, insisting that he was beaten because he objected to the confiscation of his personal medication. He remains in solitary confinement and has not been moved to the general population. ([link](#))

Annex 4: Mohyaddin Orujov's case

Mohyaddin Orujov is a member of the Labor Desk Confederation of Trade Unions. Like other members of the movement, he was repeatedly harassed and imprisoned for his political activities.

On October 19, he was sentenced to 30 days of administrative imprisonment under articles 510 (petty hooliganism) and 535.1 (resisting the police) of the Code of Administrative Offenses after he criticized Ilham Aliyev in Facebook comments. He was tortured in the 32nd police station of the Surakhani District Police Department.

Later, on [13th of December 2023](#) he was detained again and on [December 15](#), the Surakhani District Court sentenced activist Mohyeddin Orujov to a 4-month pretrial detention under Article 234.4.3 (Illegally preparing, manufacturing, acquiring, storing, transporting, sending or

selling narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances or their precursors, in large quantities) of the Criminal Code. Even if the case was appealed to the Baku Court of Appeals regarding his arrest, the case was not upheld.

On June 24, the Baku Court of Appeal heard the appeal filed by Mohyeddin Orujov regarding the extension of his pretrial detention. Earlier in June, Orujov's arrest warrant was extended for another month, leading to the appeal. According to lawyer Nazim Musayev, the appeal was denied. Musayev reported that there were no grounds for keeping Orujov in prison, with the court's decision being the only basis, and lacking legal or evidentiary support.

He compared arresting a person without any evidence to holding someone hostage. Musayev explained that, despite Orujov being in prison for seven months, neither the Surakhani District Police Department nor the district prosecutor's office had conducted any investigative actions to prove the alleged crime. Attempts to obtain a response from the relevant institutions were unsuccessful. [\(4\)](#)

On July 24, a preliminary hearing for Mohyeddin Orujov's case took place at the Baku Court of Grave Crimes. The proceedings, presided over by Judge Rasim Sadigov, were marked by several irregularities. Although the trial was open to the public, no one except Mohyaddin's mother was allowed into the courtroom. Even though Orujov was kept in a glass cage during the trial, the handcuffs on his wrist were not removed. Additionally, lawyer Nazim Musayev received a warning from the judge for filing complaints regarding the indictment. Despite the commencement of the trial, the indictment is still not ready.

During the preliminary investigation, the lawyer filed a motion to remove the investigators' responses to the defense's motions from the case materials, arguing that they had not been answered. However, the investigation's responses were later included in the case and it was claimed they had been sent to Law Office No. 9.

The lawyer submitted a document from the office confirming the non-response to the petition. Citing this forgery, the lawyer requested that the responses be removed from the case materials. The court denied the petition and rescheduled hearings. [\(5\)](#)

The violations in Mohyeddin's case go even deeper:

On January 7, 2025, his trial took place at the Baku Court of Grave Crimes. During the hearing, video footage recorded during his arrest was reviewed.

His lawyer Nazim Musayev, objected to the showing of the footage, arguing that it could influence witness testimonies. He also pointed out that not all witnesses had been heard in court, making the footage's presentation premature. Despite these objections, the court proceeded with playing the recordings.

Both Mohyaddin Orujov and those attending the trial were subjected to violence during the proceedings. Mohyaddin and his father protested the court's decision to show the footage, after which officers of the Penitentiary Service used force against Mohyaddin, pressing him against the glass of the courtroom holding cell, attempting to silence him, and handcuffing him. When attendees voiced their objections to this mistreatment, employees of the Penitentiary Service and the Ministry of Justice pushed them as well.

Sara Rahimova, was thrown to the ground, while another Board member, Tural Farzili, was also pushed. Other attendees were forcibly removed from the courtroom. Even Mohyaddin's parents and brother were subjected to violence.

Court officials further insulted trial attendees, escalating tensions in the courtroom. Following the incident, the trial was postponed.[\(6\)](#)