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Dieudonné Zognong
Cameroon

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE NONGOVERNMENTAL
INTERNATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNITY
OF DEMOCRACIES (ISC/CD) ON POLITICALLY MOTIVATED
ARRESTS OF OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS IN AZERBAIJAN
13 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Washington, 13 September 2011 – The nongovernmental International Steering Committee of the Community of Democracies (ISC/CD) calls on the government of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to end its ongoing crackdown on human rights defenders, non-governmental organizations, opposing political parties and other opposition activists in the country. The Azerbaijani authorities have repeatedly harassed, arbitrarily arrested and unjustly detained opposition activists for politically motivated reasons. Since June 2011, the government of Azerbaijan has unfairly tried and convicted nine opposition activists, including two members from opposition parties, based on politically motivated charges.

On June 17, the Nasimi District Court sentenced Nemat Panahli, the Chairman of the opposition National Statehood Party, to six years in prison for what it identified as hooliganism and causing physical injury. Nearly one month later, on July 21, the Shakmir District Court sentenced Shahin Hasanli, a member of the Azerbaijani Popular Front Party, to two years in prison.

On August 25, the Sabail District Court convicted Arif Alisli, Elnur Israfilov, Elsan Hasanov, Sahib Karimov, Zulfugar Eyvazli and Babek Hasanov for: 1) organizing actions promoting breach of social order or active participation in such actions, 2) resisting a representative of the authority or using violence against them, and 3) deliberate damage or destruction of property.

All six activists were arrested in April 2011, after participating in a political demonstration. During the trial, court officials did not allow the defense to present new evidence or cross-examine witnesses. All six were found guilty and sentenced to varying prison terms ranging from one year and six months to three years. Currently, seven more activists are awaiting trial on similar charges in connection to the demonstration.

On August 27, the Goychay District Court sentenced human rights defender Vidadi Isganderov to three years in prison for allegedly interfering with the country's November 2010 parliamentary election. Isganderov was found guilty of battery.

Following similar calls from the Alliance for Defense of Political Freedoms and Human Rights Watch, the ISC/CD asserts the need for the unconditional release of all political prisoners in Azerbaijan and denounces the government of

International Steering Committee



The Nongovernmental Process of the Community of Democracies

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Azerbaijan for continuing to unlawfully prosecute opposition activists through flawed trials.

The ISC/CD, in solidarity with opposition activists, civil society organizations and democratic governments from around the world, condemns the government of Azerbaijan for its repeated refusal to respect freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, as well as for conducting numerous unlawful detentions.

The ISC/CD affirms the need for continued international support for activists in Azerbaijan, especially as the government of Azerbaijan works to eliminate its political opponents.

The ISC/CD is a global network of civil society organizations committed to democracy and human rights, related to the Community of Democracies.