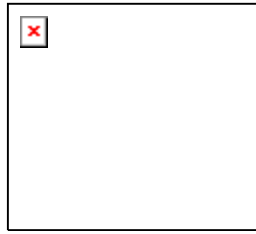


Alliance for Defense of Political  
Freedoms



Institute for Peace and  
Democracy



Institute for Reporters'  
Freedom and Safety



Human Rights Club

HDIM.NGO/0089/11  
27 September 2011

**STATEMENT OF THE CAMPAIGN  
ON  
“EUROVISION-2012 SONG CONTEST IN AZERBAIJAN:  
FREEDOM SONG IN A NON-FREE COUNTRY”**

A group of human rights organizations operating in Azerbaijan will conduct a public advocacy campaign on the eve of Eurovision-2012 song contest to be held on 22 May 2012 in Baku. The campaign, which will continue until the date of the song contest, will cover not only Azerbaijan but also other countries which are members of the Council of Europe.

Domestic and foreign NGOs working in the field of human rights and democratization are welcome to become organizers or members of the campaign.

**Background of the campaign:**

In the Eurovision-2011 song contest held on 14 May 2011 in Dusseldorf, Germany, representatives of Azerbaijan Eldar and Nigar got the first place and so it became evident that Eurovision-2012 will be held in Azerbaijan.

Believing that this contest would refresh memories about the problems in the field of Azerbaijan's integration to Europe and create new opportunities for their solution, a number of human rights organizations functioning in Azerbaijan stated that “besides being a cultural event, this victory also has public-political importance for the Azerbaijani society”, because while hosting Eurovision-2012, Azerbaijan should act not only as a host of the song contest but also as a real member of the European family which respects democratic values.

**Need for the campaign:**

During the past 10 years since Azerbaijan's accession to the Council of Europe, the country's integration to Europe has not been accompanied with deep-rooted public-political reforms and human rights and democracy have not been guaranteed. In Azerbaijan, which a member-state of both OSCE and Council of Europe, all elections have been accompanied with harsh violations of law, journalists, political parties and civic groups have not been given any opportunity to function freely, and freedom expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly, and property rights were restricted. The facts that there are political prisoners in the country, that the people who use their freedom of peaceful assembly get arrested on various fabricated charges, and that there are serious restrictions on freedom of expression and political pluralism, create doubts about Azerbaijan's place in the European family.

**Aim of the campaign:**

The main aim of this campaign is to draw political authorities, president and parliament into demonstrating efforts towards providing political-economic freedoms and removing political persecution in the country.

**Duration of the campaign:** 10 months (22 July 2011 – 22 May 2012)

**Objectives of the campaign:**

- 1) People who are considered as political prisoners by domestic human rights organizations, as well as people whose right to fair trial has been violated, must be released from prison or the court decisions on them must be changed.
- 2) Contrary to its status, Public TV of Azerbaijan, which is a member of the European Broadcasting Council and organizer of Eurovision in Azerbaijan, does not create necessary conditions for political pluralism, provide full coverage of the realities of the country, and broadcast any critical information or opinion on the authorities. Political discrimination in this area must be removed, political parties and civil associations with alternative opinion should be provided with airtime, and the activity of Public TV must be improved.
- 3) Restrictions on the freedom of expression and freedom of association and peaceful assembly, which are the main guarantees for political participation, must be lifted in Azerbaijan. Persecution and detention of the people who use these rights must be stopped.
- 4) According to the researches of human rights organizations, during 2009-2010, twenty thousand people were illegally removed from their homes by the executive authorities in Baku city, capital of Azerbaijan, and thus their property rights were harshly violated. Sixty thousand people are under the danger of losing their homes in 2011-2012. Such risks on the people's private property must be lifted and property rights must be guaranteed in the country.
- 5) Visa regulations for the citizens of the member-states of the Council of Europe traveling to Azerbaijan must be simplified and impediments on issuing visas must be removed.

**Campaign activities:**

Within the framework of this campaign, it is planned to organize public debates, issue statements, publish and distribute posters and other print materials, and undertake other necessary activities.

**Initiators of the campaign:**

Initiators of this campaign are the Alliance for Defense of Political Freedoms (SAMA), Institute for Peace and Democracy (IPD), Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS), and Human Rights Club (HRC).

The initiators call domestic and international human rights organizations to join this campaign, which sets out important targets with regard to the protection of political rights in Azerbaijan.

All enquiries concerning participation in the campaign or messages of support to the campaign from individuals or organizations can be sent to following e-mail address: [eurovision2012baku@gmail.com](mailto:eurovision2012baku@gmail.com)