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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Convictions of April 2 Protesters in Azerbaijan

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires, a. i. Gary Robbins
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 13, 2011

The United States deeply regrets the recent convictions of a number of opposition activists who participated in peaceful demonstrations on April 2. These rulings include:

The October 10 verdict of the Nasimi District Court to convict four activists- Ahad Mammadov, Ulvi Guliyev, Elnur Medzhidli, and Rufat Hajibeyli – on charges of actions disturbing public order and/or resisting police;

The October 3 ruling of the Sabail District Court to convict four activists—Arif Hajili, Tural Abbasli, Mahammad Majidli, and Fuad Gahramanli—on charges of conspiracy to violate public order for planning and organizing pro-democracy protests that took place on April 2;

We further regret decisions by the same court on August 25 to convict six other activists on similar charges.

We note that the October 11 spot report from the OSCE Office in Baku, which states that a total of 14 political activists have now been convicted as a result of the April 2 demonstration. We encourage the Office to continue its close monitoring of the court proceedings, including any related appeals.

The United States recalls the Government of Azerbaijan’s obligations under its Constitution and its OSCE commitments to respect the rule of law and the rights of all its citizens to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. Accordingly, we call upon Azerbaijan’s judicial authorities to ensure that any appeals of these convictions are reviewed in accordance with Azerbaijan’s constitutional and international commitments, which exist to help all Azerbaijanis advance democratic culture, processes, and institutions in their country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.