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## Azerbaijan human rights

### Greens call for release of Azeri human rights activist

Azeri human rights activist **Rasul Jafarov** was sentenced to six and a half years in prison on Thursday (16 April). The alleged tax avoidance charges and the sentence have been described by observers as politically-motivated and Green MEP and EU Parliament vice-president **Ulrike Lunacek** as well as **Barbara Lochbihler**, Vice-Chair of the EP Human Rights Committee, have joined the condemnation of the sentence and called for his immediate release.

According to **Lunacek**: *"Jafarov is a key figure in Azerbaijan's civil society, fighting for freedom of opinion and the media, and civil liberties. I got to know him three years ago when he initiated 'Sing for Democracy' before the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest in Baku. The Azeri authorities are presumably trying to make an example out of him to intimidate other human rights activists, with a view to ensuring the European Games in June are not overshadowed by Azerbaijan's human rights record.*

*"This strategy will not work and cannot be allowed to work. The European Parliament has already highlighted concerns with human rights in Azerbaijan on numerous occasions, including in its recent nomination of Leyla Yunus for the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2014. The Azeri authorities should instead be addressing these concerns with basic democratic freedoms and releasing all political prisoners, and the EU and its member states should be exerting more pressure to the government in Azerbaijan".*

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### **Responsible MEPs**



Barbara Lochbihler

Member



Ulrike Lunacek

EP Vice-President, Member

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