

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 15, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write to express our deep concern and urgent request for action to help Dr. Gubad Ibadoghlu, a prominent economist and academic currently in prison and facing unjust charges in Azerbaijan. On July 23, 2023, Dr. Ibadoghlu and his wife, Irada Bayramova, were forced out of their car near Baku, Azerbaijan, and violently seized by masked individuals. Dr. Ibadoghlu had returned to Azerbaijan from a visiting fellowship at the London School of Economics to care for his ailing mother earlier in July. Ms. Bayramova was released hours later after being denied communication with her husband, while Dr. Ibadoghlu remained in the custody of the Azerbaijani government.

For over two months since his initial detention, Dr. Ibadoghlu has been confined to inhumane prison conditions by the Main Department for Combatting Organized Crime at Baku Pretrial Detention Center 1. Dr. Ibadoghlu has been denied access to adequate food, water, and the medical care necessary to treat his health conditions, including diabetes. The International Committee of the Red Cross, independent doctors, and U.S. and European embassies have been denied access to him. According to his family, Dr. Ibadoghlu has also been exposed to torture by Azerbaijani authorities. Dr. Ibadoghlu must be given immediate and unconditional access to medical care and improved prison conditions in order to prevent further deterioration of his health.

We are also concerned by efforts of the Azerbaijani government to repress and silence members of Dr. Ibadoghlu's family, including those living in the United States. In August, the room of Dr. Ibadoghlu's son living on the campus of Rutgers University was found ransacked and missing important documents. This apparent act of intimidation is particularly concerning given that it occurred on U.S. soil and in violation of the law. Separately, several online accounts used by Dr. Ibadoghlu's family were compromised, and fabricated evidence aimed at discrediting Dr. Ibadoghlu and supporting false charges against him related to counterfeit currency and involvement with extremist religious activity were released. The United States must make clear to Azerbaijan and other nations that would seek to silence academics and civil society that transnational repression of this kind will not be tolerated.

Dr. Ibadoghlu is a highly respected member of the international community and has made significant contributions to research in public financial management, natural resource extraction, and corruption in Azerbaijan and the wider region. While not a U.S. citizen, Dr. Ibadoghlu has strong ties to the United States, including through his time as a visiting fellow at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Duke University, and Rutgers University. Dr. Ibadoghlu is also

a former National Endowment for Democracy fellow. We wish to honor Dr. Ibadoghlu's contributions to American universities and the academic community writ large by voicing our support for Dr. Ibadoghlu and requesting the Biden administration use every point of diplomatic leverage possible to advocate for his release and support his access to life-saving medical care and lines of communication with his family and associates. Additionally, we hope to work with the State Department to address other concerning developments in Azerbaijan's human rights record that negatively affect wide swaths of the population, including political imprisonments, laws restricting the independent operation of nongovernmental organizations, and limitations on freedom of the media.

Sincerely,



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Ted Budd
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



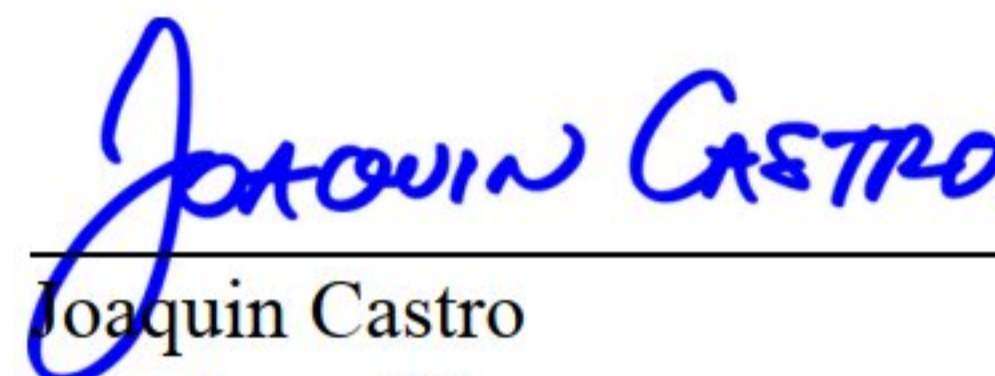
Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



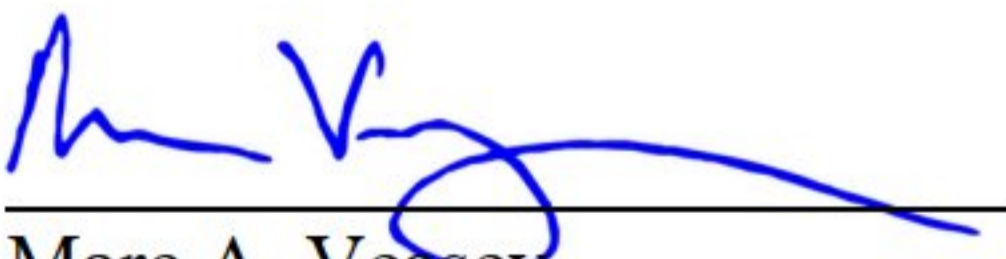
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



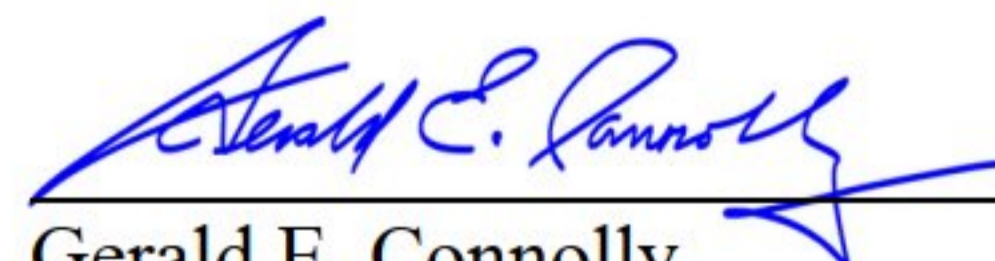
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
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Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress