



Европейски парламент Parlamento Europeo Evropský parlament Europa-Parlamentet Europäisches Parlament
Euroopa Parlament Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο European Parliament Parlement européen Parlaimint na hEorpa
Europoski parlament Parlamento europeo Eiropas Parlaments Europos Parlamentas Európai Parlament
Parlament Ewropew Europees Parlement Parliament Europejski Parlamento Europeu Parlamentul European
Európsky parlament Evropski parlament Euroopan parlamentti Europaparlamentet

**European Parliament
Brussels, July 16, 2020**

H.E. Mr. **Ilham Aliyev**, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
H.E. Mr. **Paul Biya**, President of the Republic of Cameroon
H.E. Mr. **Abdel Fattah el-Sisi**, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
H.E. Mr. **Alejandro Giammattei**, President of the Republic of Guatemala
H.E. Mr. **Martín Alberto Vizcarra**, President of the Republic of Peru
H.E. Mr. **Rodrigo Duterte**, President of the Republic of the Philippines
H.E. Mr. **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**, President of the Republic of Turkey

CC: **Mr. Eamon Gilmore**, EU Special Representative for Human Rights
CC: EU Ambassadors to the Republics of Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Egypt, Guatemala, Peru, the Philippines, and Turkey

We the undersigned Members of the European Parliament respectfully write to you today to express our concern regarding the situation in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic of all human rights defenders imprisoned worldwide.

The sanitary crisis affecting all regions of the world makes inmates particularly vulnerable and puts their health in serious danger. In this regard, self-care and community-care measures recommended to avoid the spread of the virus based on self-isolation and on maintaining a minimum distance of one metre between oneself and others are difficult to apply in detention centres where inmates live in close proximity with one another, and especially in overcrowded prisons. Moreover, poor nutrition together with a lack of adequate sanitary conditions and weak health care infrastructure in places of detention make virtually impossible to enforce any measures aimed at controlling the spread of the COVID-19 in prisons. Given the extremely contagious nature of the disease, this situation puts the lives of people deprived of liberty at risk as well as the lives of the rest of the population.

Against this backdrop, imprisonment represents a double burden for human rights defenders. In addition to their unjust detention for peacefully and legitimately defending human rights, the poor health of many of them results in a high risk of COVID-19 infection in detention centres that often fail to meet adequate health standards. Moreover, although many governments worldwide are making efforts to reduce prison population in the current context of health crisis, it is regrettable to observe the exclusion of incarcerated human rights defenders from these exceptional measures in some countries.

In this regard, it is important to stress that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet recently called on governments to release every person detained without sufficient legal basis, including human rights defenders, in order to protect their health and safety. Likewise, international civil society organisations, such as the World Organisation Against Torture



Европейски парламент Parlamento Europeo Evropský parlament Europa-Parlamentet Europäisches Parlament
Euroopa Parlament Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο European Parliament Parlement européen Parlaimint na hEorpa
Europski parlament Parlamento europeo Eiropas Parlaments Europos Parlamentas Európai Parlament
Parlament Ewropew Europees Parlement Parliament Europejski Parlamento Europeu Parlamentul European
Európsky parlament Evropski parlament Euroopan parlamentti Europaparlamentet

(OMCT), have launched several campaigns since the beginning of the pandemic calling for the release of all human rights defenders arbitrarily arrested worldwide.

We believe human rights defenders are fundamental cornerstones of transparent and healthy democracies as they work to ensure our rights are adequately respected and protected, especially in times of crisis. Accordingly, as MEPs we reiterate our steadfast commitment to human rights and join the request to liberate individuals unjustly detained for their legitimate work defending fundamental rights, including those in pre-trial detention.

In particular, we call for the release of the following individuals: Mr. Elchin Mammad, Azerbaijani human rights lawyer detained since March 2020; Ms. Teresita Naul, Filipino defender of the right to health detained since March 2020; Mr. Ibrahim Ezz El-Din, Egyptian defender of the right to adequate housing detained since June 2019; Messrs. Jorge Coc Coc and Marcelino Xol Cucul, Guatemalan defenders of indigenous rights detained since January and March 2018; Mr. Mancho Bibixy Tse, Cameroonian defender of minority rights detained since July 2018; Mr. Walter Aduviri Calisaya, Peruvian defender of indigenous and land rights detained since August 2019; and Mr. Selçuk Kozağaçlı, Turkish lawyer and defender of the right to life detained since November 2017.

Kind regards,

François ALFONSI

Pernando BARRENA

Malin BJÖRK

Reinhard BÜTIKOFER

Leila CHAIBI

Jose GUSMAO

Marisa MATIAS

Diana RIBA I GINER

Caroline ROOSE

Miguel URBÁN

Nikolaj VILLUMSEN

Salima YENBOU