

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

STATEMENT BY JOHN KIRBY, SPOKESPERSON

March 17, 2016

Release of Activists, Journalists, and Political Party Members in Azerbaijan

The United States welcomes the positive step by the Government of Azerbaijan to release more than a dozen individuals incarcerated for their work on human rights or for their exercise of fundamental freedoms.

Those released today include Rasul Jafarov, a prominent human rights defender; Anar Mammadli, chairman of the Election Monitoring and Democratic Studies Center; Hilal Mammadov, editor-in-chief of a newspaper for the Talysh ethnic minority; and Tofiq Yagublu, the Deputy Chairman of the opposition Musavat party. Journalist and peace activist Rauf Mirkadirov was also provided conditional release.

We look forward to working with Azerbaijan on additional positive steps. We also urge the government to release the remaining individuals widely considered to have been incarcerated for exercising similar freedoms and to end restrictions placed on the movement of those released.

###