

Azerbaijan



Shi'a Muslim Activists

Following increased tensions between Azerbaijan and Iran, authorities have imprisoned hundreds of devout Shi'a Muslims, Shi'a theologians, and Shi'a activists, including members of the unregistered Muslim Unity Movement, on fabricated drug charges. While officials asserted that the individuals arrested in these sweeps sought to establish a theocratic state, human rights defenders contended that many were wrongfully detained in likely connection to their religious activities, perceived religious activism, and criticism of the government's religious policies. Several of those arrested have accused law enforcement of planting false evidence, torture, and threatening sexual violence to coerce confessions.



Shahin Gadirov

RELIGION OR BELIEF:
Shi'a Muslim
ARRESTED:
November 23, 2022
SENTENCE:
3 Years' Imprisonment
NATURE OF CHARGES:
Drug Trafficking
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:
Religious Association



Ahsan Nuruzade

RELIGION OR BELIEF:
Shi'a Muslim
ARRESTED:
October 6, 2017
SENTENCE:
7 Years' Imprisonment
NATURE OF CHARGES:
Drug Trafficking
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:
Religious Association



Razi Humbatov

RELIGION OR BELIEF:
Shi'a Muslim
ARRESTED:
July 7, 2021
SENTENCE:
6 Years' Imprisonment
REPORTS OF TORTURE:
Yes
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:
Online Activity, Religious Association



Elshan Abbasov

RELIGION OR BELIEF:
Shi'a Muslim
ARRESTED:
March 3, 2022
SENTENCE:
2 Years, 6 Months' Imprisonment
NATURE OF CHARGES:
Drug Trafficking
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:
Religious Association, Religious Instruction and Teaching

Jehovah's Witnesses

The government periodically detains and imprisons Jehovah's Witnesses who conscientiously object to mandatory military service in accordance with their religious beliefs. Although the Azerbaijani constitution permits a civilian alternative, authorities have not offered one in practice.

FoRB Victims List Stats 11 out of 2,282

Religion or Belief	# of Victims	Type of Abuse	# of Victims
Shi'a	9	Imprisoned	9
Jehovah's Witnesses	2	Detained	2
Total	11	Total	11

Average Prison Sentence 6 Years

Reports of	# of Victims
Torture	3
Medical Neglect	0
Total	3

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Frank R. Wolf FoRB Victims List Background

The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA), as amended by the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2016, requires USCIRF to:

make publicly available, to the extent practicable...lists of persons it determines are imprisoned or detained, have disappeared, been placed under house arrest, been tortured, or subjected to forced renunciation of faith for their religious activity or religious freedom advocacy by the government of a foreign country that the Commission recommends for designation as a country of particular concern [CPC]...or by a nonstate actor that the Commission recommends for designation as an entity of particular concern [EPC].

USCIRF developed the Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Victims List—an online public database—to implement this provision for countries USCIRF recommends for Country of Particular Concern (CPC) or Special Watch List (SWL) status. The list also includes such victims located in the de facto territories of nonstate actors that USCIRF recommends for Entity of Particular Concern (EPC) status, according to the same criteria.

Due to limited resources, USCIRF is unable to identify and document all victims that meet the statutory requirement to be included on the FoRB Victims List and generally relies on receiving submissions from outside individuals and organizations. As such, the information contained in the database does not reflect country, regional, or global trends. Furthermore, percentages highlighted in this section should not be used for extrapolation purposes nor interpreted as a particular group experiencing greater violations than another or a particular country committing violations at a greater rate than others. To support this project, USCIRF invites those with credible information on victims to submit information using the Victims List Intake Form at www.uscirtf.gov/form/uscirtf-victims-list-intake-form.

FoRB Victims List Stats Overall

Perpetrator	Victims Documented
Algeria	5
Azerbaijan	11
Burma	5
China	798
Cuba	11
Egypt	18
Eritrea	61
Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)	2
Houthis	3
India	55
Indonesia	9
Iran	351
Iraq	2
Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP)	1
Kazakhstan	16
Malaysia	4
Nicaragua	68
Nigeria	9
North Korea	11
Pakistan	87
Russia	488
Saudi Arabia	50
Sri Lanka	1
Tajikistan	16
Turkmenistan	31
Uzbekistan	88
Vietnam	81
Total	2,282

Religion or Belief	Victims Documented
Adivasi	1
Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light	3
Baha'i	169
Bon	1
Buddhist – Hoa Hao	6
Buddhist – Theravada	3
Buddhist – Tibetan	93
Buddhist – Unspecified/Other	32
Christian – Catholic	79
Christian – Church of Almighty God	240
Christian – Jehovah's Witness	283
Christian – Orthodox	21
Christian – Protestant	150
Christian – Unspecified/Other	65
Duong Van Minh	4
ECKist (Eckankar)	1
Erfan-e Halgheh Practitioner	3
Falun Gong	217
Hindu	10
Humanist	1
Jewish	1
Muslim – Ahmadiyya	20
Muslim – Qur'anist	1
Muslim – Shi'a	40
Muslim – Sufi	64
Muslim – Sunni	412
Muslim – Unspecified/Other	233
Santeria	5
Scientologist	1
Shaman	1
Sikh	1
Yarsani	38
Unknown/Unspecified	83
Total	2,282

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Not Released

Elshan Abbasov
Shahin Gadirov
Ahsan Nuruzade
Razi Humbatov

Released

Royal Karimov
Elshan Mustafaoglu
Movsum Samadov
Seymur Mammadov
Abqul Suleymanov
Shamkhal Eyvazov

Unknown

Elvin Muradov