



FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF VICTIMS

AZERBAIJAN

Introduction

These victim profiles are illustrative of those in the Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List database. Mandated by the amended International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, the Victims List documents individuals who are detained, imprisoned, tortured, disappeared, forced to renounce their faith, or subjected to house arrest due to their religious activity or religious freedom advocacy.

Religions of Individuals in Azerbaijan on the FoRB Victims List

Muslim – Shi'a

Muslim – Unspecified/Other



Aghali Yahyayev

Religion or Belief: Muslim – Shi'a
Arrested: August 31, 2025
Sentence: 7 Years' Imprisonment
Reports of Torture: Yes
Reason for Persecution: Religious leadership role



Tarlan Sayyadov

Religion or Belief: Muslim – Shi'a
Arrested: March 2024
Sentence: 3 Years' Imprisonment
Reports of Torture: Yes
Reason for Persecution: Religious association

SHI'A MUSLIMS ACTIVISTS

The government has targeted Shi'a Muslims who do not recognize the state-controlled religious authority and instead seek religious instruction from alternative religious leaders, both inside and outside the country. Several Shi'a Muslims have claimed law enforcement planted drugs on, abused, tortured, and/or threatened to sexually assault them during their initial arrests or in pretrial detention.



Rufat Safarov

Profession: Human Rights Defender
Arrested: December 3, 2024
Nature of Charges: Assault, Fraud, Public Disorder
Reason for Persecution: Human Rights Work,
including Religious Freedom

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Azerbaijan's ongoing repression of independent civil society, especially journalists and human rights defenders, has resulted in less reporting and credible information on religious freedom and related human rights within the country. Several civil society actors who had previously reported on or documented religious freedom violations remain behind bars.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

The government periodically detains and imprisons Jehovah's Witnesses who refuse to serve in the military on religious grounds. Dozens of military-age male Jehovah's Witnesses have also received travel bans in apparent retaliation for their conscientious objection. Although the Azerbaijani constitution permits an alternative civilian service, authorities have not offered one in practice.



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NOT RELEASED

Aghali Yahyayev
Ahsan Nuruzade
Aslan Gasimov
Elgiz Mammadov
Elshan Rahimov
Gubad Ibadoglu
Ismayil Ismayilov
Javid Allahverdiyev
Khayyam Karimov
Rashad Aliyev
Razi Humbatov
Rufat Safarov
Shahin Gadirov
Tarlan Sayyadov
Vusal Alish

RELEASED

Abqul Suleymanov
Elgiz Ibrahimov
Elshan Abbasov
Elshan Mustafaoglu
Elvin Muradov
Movsum Samadov
Royal Karimov
Seymur Mammadov
Shamkhal Eyvazov