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Open letter by the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

We are writing to bring to your attention the situation of Emin Aslan, a recent law graduate of your University who returned to his native Azerbaijan at the beginning of this month only to be arrested in Baku in the afternoon on 4 June when he was hustled into a car by plain-clothes government security operatives and sentenced the next day by a local court to 30 days detention for allegedly failing to obey police instructions.

Mr Aslan is a well-regarded human rights lawyer who has helped his fellow citizens to prepare submissions to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg and worked with the Media Rights Institute, a pro media freedom non-governmental organisation that was forced by the authorities to close in 2014. We have reason to believe that Mr Aslan is innocent of any offence and that his detention and subsequent prison sentence are designed as a warning by the authorities in Azerbaijan to Mr Aslan to desist from his pro human rights activities. Indeed we fear that his future is bleak in a country where basic freedoms are curtailed, independent non-governmental organisations are not permitted to operate freely and corruption at the highest levels is rife.

Mr Aslan's only defence against continued harassment is for well-wishers such as former teachers and fellow students at Syracuse abroad to speak out and urge the authorities to lift his detention order and furthermore respect his civil rights and those of more than 100 political prisoners in his country, indeed to show the authorities that the fate of a graduate of your University remains a matter of concern for your community also after he completes his studies.

We urge you to write to Mr Ramil Usubov, the interior minister of Azerbaijan, to express your concern over Mr Aslan's fate as well as to the Embassy of Azerbaijan in the United States. We would also respectfully suggest that you contact the US State Department in Washington as well as the Embassy of the United States in Baku to ask them to intervene with the authorities on Mr Aslan's behalf and to maintain contact with Mr Aslan so that his situation can be monitored.

On behalf of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

Krzysztof Bobinski
Co-chair



Alexandra Kalatozishvili
Co-chair



Laura Dittel
Member, Syracuse University Alumna



About the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) is a unique multi-layered regional civil society platform aimed at promoting European integration, facilitating reforms and democratic transformations in the six Eastern Partnership countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine - under the auspices of the European Union. Serving as the civil society and people-to-people dimension of the Eastern Partnership, the EaP CSF strives to strengthen civil society in the region, boost pluralism in public discourse and policy making by promoting participatory democracy and fundamental freedoms. For more information, please visit [the EaP CSF website](#).