

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

AZERBAIJAN: Shia Imam Sardar Babayev is free

Sardar Babayev had been in HRWF Database of FORB Prisoners since his arrest. For the first time, there are now no more FORB prisoners in the country

HRWF (01.04.2020) – Imam Sardar Babayev has been released at the normal end of his prison term. He had been arrested on 22 February 2017 on the basis of a controversial law (Article 168-1.3.1 of the Penal Code) criminalizing religious activities by clerics who had gained theological education in a foreign country, Iran in his case.

A delegation of the United States Commission on International

Religious Freedom (USCIRF) was then in Baku to meet with Azerbaijani government officials, religious communities, civil society representatives, and human rights defenders to assess religious freedom conditions and discuss the impact of Azerbaijan's religion law on the ability of individuals and communities to exercise their freedom of religion. No doubt that their presence in Azerbaijan at that time facilitated his release.

The number of people in prison in Azerbaijan for the exercise of their religious freedom has progressively decreased over the years as indicated by our database of FORB prisoners (<https://bit.ly/2xCvbfi>):

2015: 19 prisoners (6 Sunnis – 6 followers of the Turkish theologian Said Nursi – 4 Jehovah's Witnesses – 3 Shia Muslims)

2016: 12 prisoners (5 followers of Said Nursi – 3 Sunni Muslims – 2 Shias – 2 Jehovah's Witnesses)

2017: 2 prisoners (Shia Muslims)

2018: 2 prisoners (Shia Muslims)

2019: 1 prisoner (Shia Muslim)

However, the decreasing number of FORB prisoners is not the result of less repressive laws. There hasn't been any substantial change in the legislation regarding FORB, but its implementation has been less aggressive in the past few years. No doubt that the role of the US and the EU behind the scenes has contributed to these developments.

A case has been filed with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR): *Babayev v. Azerbaijan* (Application No. 34015/17). Police arrested Sardar Babayev in February 2017. A court sentenced him in July 2017 to three years imprisonment for leading prayers in a mosque after having received his religious education outside Azerbaijan. His lawyer initially brought his case to the ECHR to challenge his pre-trial detention, but afterwards he updated it to challenge Sardar Babayev's sentence.

Notice: Undefined index: et_footer_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

Notice: Undefined index: et_footer_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268

Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1269