

I greet you all from the Baku Pre-trial Detention Center, where I have been illegally detained for the past nine months.

I was honored with awards for my journalistic work while I was free. However, I must admit that the award I received while in prison has moved me even more deeply. For someone in captivity, this is a tremendous source of motivation.

Since the age of 17, I have strived to contribute to human rights and serve the truth. Even knowing which country I live in — and that such activity in Azerbaijan often results in arrest — nothing could deter me from this path. I continued my work even after March 2025, when the Voice of America radio station, where I had worked for six years, was closed down. I shared news, reports, and information regarding human rights violations in Azerbaijan through my personal social media accounts, without any compensation.

Because I refused to cease my journalistic activities, I was arrested on May 6, 2025, on trumped-up charges. During the arrest, police officers struck me seven times on the head and tore out my hair. Despite this, I continue my journalism even from within the prison walls: I interview other political prisoners, write articles, and shed light on rights violations occurring inside the detention center.

The writer Henry Thoreau said that under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just people is also a prison. If anyone thinks that our influence will wane in prison, that our voices will no longer be heard, or that we cannot struggle as before within these walls, they are mistaken. They understand neither how much stronger truth is than lies, nor how effectively and skillfully someone who has witnessed even a little injustice can fight against it.

In a world where truth is manipulated, distorted, and traded for money, we continue to reclaim the truth, even from behind bars. I thank everyone standing in solidarity with me — my friends, my family, and especially my partner who has given me unparalleled support during this period.

Long live the free press, long live independent journalists, and long live all those who refuse to bow to oppression!

Ulviyya Guliyeva (Ali)
