



**UN Human Rights Council  
Forty-seventh Session**

**Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges  
and lawyers**

**Statement**

**delivered by Ms. Marziyya Vakilova-Mardaliyeva, First Secretary of the Permanent  
Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN Office and other International  
Organizations in Geneva**

**June 28, 2021**

Madame President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his report and share the view on importance of reduction of the prison population, medical care, education for detainees and training for staff to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in prisons.

Azerbaijan has adopted a robust strategy to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and to minimize its impact on the population, including on the prison population.

Along with comprehensive preventive measures implemented by the Medical Service of the Ministry of Justice of Azerbaijan to prevent the spread of the pandemic, number of detainees have been released and non-custodial measures implemented to reduce the risk of contagion among prisoners and prison staff.

According to the Presidential Decree from 6 April 2020, 176 prisoners aged over 65 in need of special care due to their age and state of health were pardoned. According to another Decree from 18 March 2021 on pardoning 625 convicts, 475 convicts were released from penitentiaries, the prison terms of 98 convicts were cut by half, and three life terms shortened to 25 years. Additionally, 49 individuals were released from non-custodial measures.

Since March 2020, Azerbaijan has released more than 2000 persons on parole and granted early release for detainees with serious illnesses. It has also released more than 1000 individuals from pretrial detention, opting to implement non-custodial measures instead.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic Azerbaijan has distributed information booklets on COVID-19 to prisoners with the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In response to the increased strains on the mental health of detainees, Azerbaijan has deployed additional psychologists to discuss mental health issues with prisoners with assistance from ICRC. Azerbaijan has increased the telephone rights of prisoners and has distributed free phone cards to prisoners, and has intensified awareness raising activities for prison staff.

Azerbaijan has also decided to accede to the Second Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, which allows parties to use videoconferencing to apply for mutual legal assistance, including electronic submission of documents and interviewing of witnesses and experts.

I thank you.