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Azerbaijan: Woman human rights defender Rabiyya Mammadova abducted and attacked

On 8 March 2021, woman human rights defender **Rabiyya Mammadova** was abducted and attacked by three plainclothes individuals whilst on her way to the women's march on International Women's Day in Baku. As a result of the physical assault, she incurred injuries to her throat and right ear, resulting in partial deafness, and an injury to her left arm.

[Rabiyya Mammadova](#) is a prominent woman human rights defender and gender equality activist. She has been involved in the organization of peaceful demonstrations to protest gender inequality and discrimination, as well as protests against electoral fraud in Azerbaijan in 2019 and 2020. Rabiyya Mammadova is also a Board member of the **Nida Civic Movement**, a movement founded in 2011 to achieve democratic and social changes in Azerbaijan.

On 8 March 2021, Rabiyya Mammadova was on her way the women's march on International Women's Day in a taxi when three plainclothes individuals, who the woman human rights defender did not know, got into the car. The three men forcibly removed Rabiyya Mammadova from the taxi and placed her in another unmarked car, and then drove to the police station №37 in Baku. They did not say anything to Rabiyya Mammadova to indicate the reason for her abduction.

Once the car arrived at the police station, two of the men got out of the whilst the other punched Rabiyya Mammadova in the ear and choked her. Police officers witnessing the incident outside the station attempted to stop the attacker, who reportedly told them that the three men were following orders from the deputy of the city police department, and proceeded to beat Rabiyya Mammadova. Following the attack, the woman human rights defender was brought into the police station for approximately 40 minutes, during this time she was not provided with any medical assistance. The police officers told Rabiyya Mammadova that the three men who abducted her work with the Main Organized Crime Department. Her lawyer was eventually informed of the incident, and immediately called an ambulance to the police station. Upon hearing that the ambulance was en route, the police officers forced Rabiyya Mammadova to leave the station.

The ambulance collected the woman human rights defender from outside the station and brought her to the Sabunchu Hospital №3, where she was diagnosed with an injury to her left arm, a throat injury, an injury to her right ear and partial deafness as a result. Rabiyya Mammadova's lawyer has filed a complaint to the Prosecutor General's Office and Ombudsman in relation to the abduction and attack. The woman human rights defender has since received messages on her phone from unknown individuals, including criticism of feminism, threats and naked photos. Before the incident on 8 March, she had also received threats for her human rights activities.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the abduction and attack of woman human rights defender Rabiyya Mammadova, as it believes she is being targeted solely as a result of her work in promoting and protecting women's rights in Azerbaijan. This abduction and attack comes at a time when other woman human rights defenders in the country have been subjected to intimidation and [smear campaigns](#) in reprisal for their legitimate human rights work, furthering women's rights and gender equality, in attempts to pressure them to cease this work. Front Line Defenders condemns the intimidation and targeting of the woman human's rights defender,

which may have a chilling effect on civil society, and is not conducive to the creation of a safe and enabling environment in which human rights defenders can carry out their work in Azerbaijan.

Front Line Defenders calls on the authorities in Azerbaijan:

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Rabiyya Mammadova;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the abduction and attack against Rabiyya Mammadova, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Azerbaijan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.