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THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION / EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## **US EMBASSY STATEMENT ON RIGHT OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY**

**May 20, 2005**

The U.S. Embassy welcomed the President's Decree of May 12 instructing the Azerbaijani government authorities nationwide to work vigorously to guarantee that Azerbaijan holds free, fair and transparent Parliamentary elections. The people of Azerbaijan deserve nothing less and we commend the Decree's principled commitment to international, democratic standards.

Unfortunately, the recent detention and arrest of over 30 members of the Opposition cast doubt on the Azerbaijani government's commitment to implementing the President's Decree. The Embassy joins the OSCE Mission in expressing its concern that such actions undermine the spirit and the letter of the President's Decree.

The President's Decree affirms the people's Constitutional right to peaceful assembly – a right that a democracy must justly cherish and fiercely guard. The U.S. Embassy calls on the authorities to guarantee that the right of the people to freely assemble, a vital part of a nation's ability to conduct free and fair elections, is protected in the spirit of the President's message.