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

### **State Department Statement on Azerbaijani Release of Prisoners**

March 19, 2004

The United States welcomes the news that President Ilham Aliyev pardoned and released 129 prisoners on March 17. Twenty-six of these individuals had been identified as political prisoners by the Council of Europe, including former Prime Minister Surrat Huseynov. We applaud this step. We urge the Government of Azerbaijan to make more progress on human rights, including the resolution of the cases of those still in jail following the October 15-16 post-election demonstrations.