

“No Tree Cutting!” program Three-Year Report

May 2014 - May 2017

The “No Tree Cutting!” program was launched on 5 May 2014 by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and IDEA (International Dialogue for Environmental Action) Public Union. Initiated by the Vice President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, founder and head of IDEA Leyla Aliyeva, the program aims to address the pressing environmental problems in Azerbaijan and enhance the country’s socio-ecological system.

A hotline (for both landline and mobile operators – 1113) called “First Aid to Nature” and a mobile response team has been created within the program. Citizens encountering illegal removal of trees in public spaces report such cases to IDEA through this hotline. The mobile response team conducts on-site investigations of the submitted complaints, collects additional information, photo and video materials related to each case, and takes necessary action in cooperation with the relevant government agencies.

Over the past two years, IDEA received a total of 265 complaints concerning illegal felling of trees in the cities of Baku and Sumgayit. Each case was considered individually and appropriately documented by IDEA and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Furthermore, entries on every case have been posted on the website of IDEA, which contain detailed information and pictures taken at reported locations. Relevant documents issued by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources on each occurrence are also attached to these entries. A report on the implementation of the program is published and made available to the public every six months.

During inspections, cases of illegal felling and damaging of trees as well as conducting of unauthorized construction works in green areas by legal entities and individuals were exposed on various sites. Based on revealed facts, appropriate protocols were issued by relevant agencies, corresponding administrative penalties were imposed and official requests were sent to the relevant local executive bodies in cities/districts and law enforcement agencies, so that necessary measures are taken against individuals and legal entities that had committed law violations.

The action taken on the basis of the received complaints can be divided into several categories and constitutes the following:

- Cases of illegal tree-cutting were found as a result of investigations concerning complaints No. 5, 24, 25, 28, 32, 40, 50, 51, 53, 55, 59, 69, 72, 77, 98, 100, 102, 120, 122, 147, 159, 172, 178, 187, 190, 212, 214, 219, 250, 259 and 263; therefore, various legal entities and individuals were fined by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, in accordance with articles 92.2, 92.3.1, 92.3.2, 110, 113.1.1, 319, 253.2 and 253.3.1 of the Code on Administrative Offences of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The proceeds from these fines were transferred to the State Fund for Environmental Protection. This fund provides financing for urgent environmental protection measures, elimination of the environmental damage, development of the ecologically-efficient new projects and technologies, etc.

Note: Fines in entries No. 172, 178, 187, 190, 212, 214 and 219 were applied on the basis of the Code on Administrative Offences of the Republic of Azerbaijan effected by Law No. 96-VQ (Articles 253.2 and 253.3.1) adopted on 29 December 2015.

- Complaints No. 2, 8, 30, 74, 57, 26, 79, 89, 92, 99, 101, 133, 137, 139, 141, 148, 149, 153, 176, 179, 197, 199, 203, 204, 206, 213, 215, 220, 221, 222, 223, 226, 227, 228, 232, 235, 245, 249, 251, 254, 255 and 258 were concerning old, dead trees with damaged trunks in streets and alleys and around the residential buildings of Baku, which have become hazardous to human life. Most of these trees are species of poplar that reach a height of 25-30 meters and whose root networks rapidly deteriorate. Winds at average speed cause such trees to suddenly fall, putting human lives at risk. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned concerns, in accordance with the assessment of the State Examination Department of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, safe pruning (or complete cutting down when trees are dead) of hazardous poplar trees exceeding 10-12 meters in height that have curved or decayed trunks.
- Complaints No. 2, 3, 4, 10, 52, 57, 49, 68, 99, 106, 113, 126, 129, 154, 161, 166, 171, 180, 208, 209, 229 and 230 were related to damage to green spaces caused during the construction works of state significance, such as building of kindergartens, new residential buildings for Karabakh war veterans and families of victims, state-owned enterprises and roads. In this regard, 313 trees of olive, sophora, pine, sycamore, poplar, thuja, cypress, silverberry, apricot, mulberry and melia with less than 32 cm in diameter were transferred to other areas for protection. The transportation was organized under the agreement between the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and relevant authorities, in compliance with current regulations and safety standards. Thus, before transportation, professional experts, in compliance with agro-technical requirements, conducted a strict oversight of the pruning and treatment processes of relatively large-sized trees, as well as of the replacement of dead trees with new ones of same species. Removal of oversized dead and old trees (sophora, silverberry and pine trees over 32-36 cm in diameter), which were located within the construction areas and whose transfer was not possible, was authorized as a special case by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. However, 10 new trees of the same species have been planted to replace the removed trees.
- Based on the complaints No.11, 33, 53, 57, 58, 93, 109, 122, 125, 135, 162, 163, 167, 192, 211, 224, 234, 236 and 241, IDEA has held tree-planting actions in different parts of Baku. The planting events were necessitated by cases of massive destruction of trees as a result of tree-cutting and fires. During such events, 153 species of cypress, pine, sycamore and mulberry were planted, destroyed greeneries were restored, new parks, green areas and lawns were created.
- Based on complaints No. 19, 20, 21, 22, 34, 35, 37, 39, 78, 82, 90, 91, 95, 103, 104, 110, 124, 125, 142, 143, 152, 156, 183 and 233, trees were pruned and landscape renovation works were carried out by specialists of the Greenery Agriculture Association under the Executive Power of the city of Baku, in accordance with appropriate regulations, as approved by State Examination Department of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.
- Since no official documents could be obtained during investigations regarding complaints No. 9, 38, 44, 45, 61, 75, 83, 94, 105, 111, 115, 118, 123, 130, 136, 138, 151, 158, 160, 181, 182, 194, 196, 238, 239, 243, 257, 260 and 261, inquiries were sent to law enforcement authorities regarding the areas in question by representatives of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.
- Complaints No. 6, 15, 17, 54, 62, 84, 85, 134, 145, 155, 207, 218 and 231 were related to destroyed greeneries on private property. IDEA held talks with appropriate authorities

and property owners aimed at resolving such issues, and, in majority of cases, transfer of trees or restoration of the destroyed greenery was achieved.

- Complaints No.1, 7, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 23, 27, 29, 35, 36, 41, 42, 43, 46, 47, 48, 56, 60, 65, 64, 63, 66, 67, 70, 71, 73, 80, 81, 86, 87, 88, 96, 97, 107, 108, 112, 114, 116, 117, 119, 121, 127, 128, 131, 132, 140, 144, 146, 150, 157, 170, 173, 174, 175, 188, 189, 195, 198, 200, 202, 204, 205, 216, 217, 225, 237, 240, 242, 244, 246, 247, 248, 252, 253, 256, 261, 262, 264, 265 were cases of potential tree-cutting. No signs of tree cutting were observed at the relevant locations by the arriving response team. Nonetheless, the areas, where removal of trees was likely to occur, were taken under monitoring. Thus, trees that are under threat of damage in those areas were recorded and relevant documents were issued by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, while IDEA addressed official letters to the relevant executive bodies of Baku and its districts. Based on these documents and letters, executive bodies have instructed the appropriate agencies with regard to greenery protection and oversight at relevant areas.

More information about the submitted complaints and the taken action can be obtained from IDEA's regularly updated website (www.ideacampaign.org/az/first_aid_to_the_nature/).

IDEA Public Union expresses its deep gratitude to the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, appropriate executive bodies, and our citizens for their invaluable support to "No Tree Cutting!" program.

Once again, IDEA encourages citizens to report all cases of illegal tree cutting by calling our 1113 hotline from all mobile operators and landlines.