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"We would have won the election even before these arrests. But the arrests and sackings show that the government was not united [...] and Ilham Aliev was afraid of an image of government on the threshold of disunity."</p> <p>Some say that with Guliev implicated in the plot to overthrow the government, the Popular Front could be next.</p> <p>"It's a possibility," said Mustafaev. "Torture is a possibility" for the men recently arrested as well, he told ISN Security Watch. "The government is like a junta."</p>	<p>Search</p> <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="GO"/>
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But an official in the pro-government New Azerbaijan Party dismissed the seemingly dramatic nature of the arrests. The underlying issues behind the arrests were not simply political, but criminal, said Mubariz Gurban.

"What we have seen here is the fight of President Aliev against corruption as well as preventing the usurping of the government," he said.

As to mass support for the opposition, he waved his hands in the air and declared: "It is no more than 15 to 20 per cent."

He dismissed speculation that a Ukraine- or Georgia-style revolution could take place on election day on 6 November.

"A revolution cannot take place in Azerbaijan as happened in Ukraine or Georgia. Why? Azerbaijan has oil! Revolutions do not happen in oil states!"

Baku is now bracing itself for the Sunday demonstrations, and the speaker of Azerbaijan's parliament, Murtuz Alasgarov, has warned that the investigations are not over and more arrests should be expected in the coming days.

(By Karl Rahder in Baku)

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