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FORMER BAKU DEPUTY MAYOR REFUSES TO TESTIFY IN CORRUPTION TRIAL

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Eldaniz Laidjev refused on 12 June to testify or answer any questions from the prosecution at his ongoing trial for embezzlement, Turan reported. Laidjev and several subordinates are accused of embezzling funds paid in compensation by the United States to families whose homes were demolished to make way for the expansion of the U.S. Embassy complex (see "RFE/RL Newslines," 10 April and 6 June 2003). Several of the families in question are picketing the courthouse to demand that former Baku Mayor Rafael Allakhverdiev, once a close associate of Aliiev, also be brought to trial in the case.