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# Azerbaijan: From Newsroom to Cell. Persecution of Independent Journalists

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



# **“If you are reading this message, it means I have been arrested on trumped-up charges due to my journalistic activity”**

journalist Ulviyya Ali (Guliyeva)<sup>1</sup>

This message was published on several independent media platforms after the independent reporter, and previously Voice of America journalist, Ulviyya Ali was arrested on 7 May 2025. Just before the arrest, she had attended a court hearing in the case against journalists and media workers linked with the independent news agency Abzas Media. Ulviyya Ali was one of the last remaining media workers who still reported from the hearings against government critics and journalists. Such hearings are ongoing as part of the Azerbaijani authorities' crackdown against independent media and civil society representatives.

In Azerbaijan, critical journalists face persecution and severe reprisals for their work, including arbitrary arrests, fabricated charges, unfair trials and long prison sentences in harsh detention conditions. They often find themselves at the forefront of the fight for human rights and freedom of expression, facing immense personal and professional risks.

The government crackdown against free media and dissent increased before the country hosted the UN climate change conference COP29 in November 2024. The authorities could not tolerate international attention on Azerbaijan's human rights record, or to have its image tarnished by allegations of environmental malpractice, corruption or other government abuses. Therefore, the government targeted anyone who sought to criticize its record. After COP29, the crackdown only escalated further. The authorities have particularly targeted journalists from independent outlets like Abzas Media, Meydan TV, Toplum TV, Kanal 13, and Kanal 11, many of whom have been reporting on allegations of the misuse of power and corruption, environmental issues and human rights abuses.

Now, less than a year on from COP29, there are no independent national media outlets left in the country. Azerbaijan has the highest number of imprisoned media workers held on politically motivated charges in the country since it joined the Council of Europe in 2001.<sup>2</sup>

## **TARGETING OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA OUTLETS VIA RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION**

**“Since 1999, we have strived to save our media's economic independence, yet year by year, independent media has lost its economic freedom and some are under the control of the government,”** stated Mehman Aliyev, an editor of the prominent TURAN Agency, announcing that TURAN will shut down in February 2025.<sup>3</sup>

TURAN was one of the last remaining independent media outlets in Azerbaijan to be affected by the law “On Media”, passed in December 2022 to restrict independent outlets. The Venice Commission criticised the law in June 2022, stating that it “has a problematic focus on restricting

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<sup>1</sup> Ulviyya Ali (@UlviyyaAli), post on X, 7 May 2025, <https://x.com/UlviyyaAli/status/1920038274141167618>

<sup>2</sup> International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) and Campaign to End Repression in Azerbaijan, “Azerbaijan's Defiance: A Decade of Contempt for the Council of Europe”, Baku, Brussels and Geneva, January 2025, <https://iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/coe-az-report-finalised.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Aytan Farhadova, “Azerbaijan continues media crackdown — Turan and BBC Azerbaijan forced to close offices”, OC Media, 14 February 2025, <https://oc-media.org/azerbaijan-continues-media-crackdown-turan-and-bbc-azerbaijan-forced-to-close-offices/>

the activities of the media rather than creating the necessary conditions enabling the media to fulfil their ‘public watchdog’ role.”<sup>4</sup>

These concerns were shared by many Azerbaijani journalists.

Abzas Media’s director Ulvi Hasanli and his deputy Mahammad Kekalov were among key media figures who raised the alarm in international forums about the negative impact the law would have on Azerbaijan’s media landscape. Their concerns have proven well-founded.

Independent media outlets like Abzas Media, Meydan TV, Toplum TV and Kanal 13, which had a strong focus on human rights amongst other sensitive topics, faced constant pressure for years. This included arbitrary denial of registration, raids on their offices, and the blocking of bank accounts, all aimed at stifling their operations and cutting off their funding.

On 14 July 2025, the Azerbaijani parliament adopted amendments tightening the country's media law, which, according to experts, will further hinder the work of local and international media in the country.

For instance, foreign outlets have to apply for registration in the Media Registry. The activities of online and offline media outlets that are not included in the registry will be terminated. At the same time, if media organisations that do not comply with the requirements of the register and continue to violate the rules after being warned, will be removed from the register and access to their websites will be restricted.<sup>5</sup>

The targeting of free media has gone beyond restrictions on media outlets and extended to individual journalists and media workers. Such individuals have been prosecuted on fabricated charges, arbitrarily arrested, held in harsh conditions, and subjected to ill-treatment and other violations. Moreover, their families have also come under government pressure, facing harassment and the freezing of their assets.

## ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND PROSECUTION UNDER FABRICATED CHARGES

**“I have not committed any violation that would be covered by any article in the Criminal Code. But there is also an unofficial Criminal Code in Azerbaijan, and freedom of speech is considered a crime there. I committed that crime.”**  
Journalist Farid Mehralizada from Radio Free Europe in court, 28 December 2024.<sup>6</sup>

Journalists who expose alleged corruption, human rights abuses, or environmental concerns are routinely targeted with prosecution under politically motivated charges. Common charges used include smuggling, illegal entrepreneurship, money laundering, and tax evasion. They are often manifestly baseless and designed to silence their reporting that is critical of the authorities. For instance, the charges of money smuggling may be supported by such “evidence” as money in cash discovered during searches – in such amounts that do not raise suspicion in themselves. In some instances, the defense claims that no evidence of any kind of smuggling is presented against their clients (for instance, the Abzas Media case, see details below),

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<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe, “Azerbaijan media law: overregulation in an already restrictive environment”, 20 June 2022, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/azerbaijan-media-law-overregulation-in-an-already-restrictive-environment>

<sup>5</sup> Gözetçi.az, “Media haqqında qanuna dəyişikliklər qəbul edildi”, 14 July 2025, <https://gozetci.az/2025/07/33431>

<sup>6</sup> Farid Mehralizada, statement in court, Baku, 28 December 2024, reported by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, <https://www.rferl.org/a/baku-azerbaijan-journalist-sentence-rfe-mehralizada-media-crackdown/33449887.html>

Currently, there are at least 29 journalists and media workers imprisoned or held in pretrial detention in Azerbaijan, nine of them are women.

**“Our arrests are meant to silence us and remove us from our work because we exposed the corruption crimes of [President] Ilham Aliyev and his circle. We refused to engage in the kind of "authorized journalism" that the government prefers.”** Sevinj Vagifgizi, editor-in-chief of Abzas Media, 11 March 2025.<sup>7</sup>

On 20 June 2025, the Baku Court of Serious Crimes sentenced Sevinj Vagifgizi and six other media workers affiliated with the independent investigative outlet Abzas Media – director Ulvi Hasanli, investigative journalist Hafiz Babali, reporters Nargiz Absalamova and Elnara Gasimova, translator Mahammad Kekalov, and economist and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty contributor Farid Mehralizada – to prison terms ranging from seven and a half to nine years. The charges included currency smuggling, money laundering, tax evasion and forgery of documents.

In the case of Abzas Media, the lawyers of the seven co-defendants highlighted consistently that the case lacks credible legal grounds and that the charges are baseless and politically motivated. During the hearing, the lawyers argued that while the case was formally opened under smuggling charges, none of the accused were found in possession of any illegal goods when crossing the border, nor was any such evidence discovered during searches.



**“When I first heard about residents in Soyudlu protesting against plans to create yet another waste lake that would pollute their village, I knew it was important for me to go and cover the story. (...) As one of the few independent news organizations still operating in Azerbaijan, my team and I at Abzas Media decided to visit the village to cover the demands of the residents and investigate the mining company’s actions.”**

Nargiz Absalamova in a letter written to Amnesty International from behind bars explaining why she covered the environmental protests.<sup>8</sup>

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Abzas Media journalists were among the numerous others who have been arbitrarily arrested and subjected to unfair trials.

On 6 December 2024, in the aftermath of the UN Climate Change conference COP29 held in Baku, Azerbaijani authorities detained seven journalists and media workers on spurious charges

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<sup>7</sup> Sevinj Vagifgizi, "Ilham Aliyev's words and actions contradict each other, and the employees of 'Abzas Media' who exposed this contradiction became the target of his wrath", Abzas Media, 14 April 2025, <https://abzas.org/en/2025/4/sevinj-vagifgizi-ilham-aliyev7d281d1a-f/>

<sup>8</sup> Amnesty International, "Meet Nargiz Absalamova, a journalist arrested for reporting on protests in Azerbaijan", 27 November 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2024/11/meet-nargiz-absalamova-a-journalist-arrested-for-reporting-on-protests-in-azerbaijan/>

of smuggling. Lawyers of the journalists reported that they were unable to meet with their respective clients for several hours following their detention.<sup>9</sup>

Those arrested were journalists affiliated with media outlet Meydan TV: Aynur Ganbarova, Aysel Umudova, Aytaj Ahmadova (Tapdig), Khayala Agayeva, Natig Javadli and Ramin Jabrayilzade. In February 2025, independent journalists Nurlan Libre Gahramanli and Shamshad Agha and Fatima Movlamli were arrested as part of the same case. On 7 May, Ulviyya Ali was the last journalist arrested in relation to the Meydan TV case. She denied any affiliation with the independent news outlet, as she had been working for Voice of America. The court hearings are ongoing at the time of writing.

RFE journalist Farid Mehralizada, was detained in May 2024 and placed under pretrial detention in June 2024 for “conspiring to smuggle foreign currency” under Article 206.3.2 of Azerbaijan’s Criminal Code in connection with a case the authorities brought against Abzas Media, for which Farid Mehralizada never worked. On 19 August 2024 new charges were brought against him of illegal entrepreneurship, money laundering, tax evasion, and document forgery.<sup>10</sup>

Journalists from Toplum TV, another independent Azerbaijani media outlet known for its critical reporting, faced severe reprisals as well. On 6 March 2024, Azerbaijani law enforcement officers raided the offices of Toplum TV, the Democratic Initiatives Institute (IDI), and the Third Republic Platform, as well as the homes of several journalists and activists. These raids led to the arrest of Alasgar Mammadli, Toplum TV’s founder, as well as several other persons on charges of smuggling.

During the court hearing on 30 June 2025, the judge of the Court of Grave Crimes asked the defendants whether they considered themselves guilty. The founder Alasgar Mammadli responded:

**“They call us an organized gang and claim that we have been operating since 2014. Ilkin Amrahov, who was arrested with us, was 12 years old at the time. How did he become a member of an organized gang at the age of 12? The young people sitting behind the glass here are not guilty. Their only crime is that they listened to us intellectuals and ran after the truth. Looking at them, I feel guilty that I showed them the way. If the Constitution of Azerbaijan considers this a crime, then I am a criminal.”<sup>11</sup>**

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<sup>9</sup> Amnesty International, No Sign of Hope for the Human Rights Situation in Azerbaijan: Systemic and Serious Breaches of Human Rights Must be Strongly Condemned, January 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/EUR5589632025ENGLISH.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “Farid Mehralizada”, Advocacy, undated, <https://about.rferl.org/advocacy/imprisoned-journalists/farid-mehralizada/>

<sup>11</sup> Toplum Media, “Vergilər Nazirliyi ‘Toplumçulardan’ 79 min manat istəyir,” 19 July 2025, <https://toplummedia.tv/mehkeme/pvergiler-nazirliyi-ldquotoplumrdquoccedilulardan-79-min-manat-isteyirnbssp>

## HARSH DETENTION CONDITIONS AND ILL-TREATMENT

**“I want everyone to know: in the space of 24 hours, I was threatened with rape twice by the Azerbaijani police,”** Ulviyya Ali in a letter from prison, referred to by OC Media.<sup>12</sup>

The journalist Ulviyya Ali has also reported to be violently assaulted by three police officers when refusing to disclose passwords to her computer and phones on 7 May 2025.<sup>13</sup>

Arbitrary arrests of journalists are followed by investigations, often conducted without due process, and leading to trials that lack fairness and transparency. Once in custody, journalists are frequently denied access to their lawyers during questioning, and their requests for transfer to house arrest or adequate healthcare are typically rejected. The legal system is weaponized to punish dissent, making it virtually impossible for these journalists to receive justice. Moreover, threats and ill-treatment of detained journalists have become a widespread tactic, while they are also often subjected to intense intimidation, and experience harsh conditions.

On 30 May 2024, when Farid Mehralizade was arrested, he was taken to the police department by unidentified men who placed a bag over his head. Police refused to allow him access to his lawyer during questioning and while searching his house.<sup>14</sup>

The imprisoned journalist Polad Aslanov went on hunger strike to protest against the imprisonment of journalists, before COP29 in November 2024. After this, he was transferred to the Penitentiary Institution N15 in November 2024 and placed in isolation for 32 days. According to his family, since May 2025, he has been targeted by a smear campaign and faced psychological pressure in detention after he reported on unsanitary conditions, a lack of hot water and overcrowded cells. Polad Aslanov's wife, Gulmira Aslanova, complained to the relevant authorities about the conditions of her husband's detention. When representatives from the authorities came to the prison to carry out an inspection in June 2025, Polad Aslanov was placed in an isolation cell for five hours.

On 24 July 2024, Ulvi Hasanli reported receiving threats from the administration after publishing a letter from his detention centre, alleging that prisoners are subject to torture and other ill-treatment, including being beaten and hung on bars in the corridors. The letter came shortly after The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) had published its unprecedented statement in July 2024 about the “persistent lack of cooperation by the Azerbaijani authorities”. The CPT pointed out that while it continued to receive allegations of severe acts of ill-treatment, no action had been taken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan to implement the Committee's long-standing recommendations to end such practices.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Xandie (Alexandra) Kuenning, “Azerbaijani journalist Ulviyya Ali ‘threatened with rape’ by police in detention”, OC Media, 19 May 2025, <https://oc-media.org/azerbaijani-journalist-ulviyya-ali-threatened-with-rape-by-police-in-detention/>

<sup>13</sup> Ali Ulviyya, post on X, 19 June 2025, <https://x.com/UlviyyaAli/status/1908453152044593583>

<sup>14</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “Farid Mehralizade”, Advocacy, undated, <https://about.rferl.org/advocacy/imprisoned-journalists/farid-mehralizade/>

<sup>15</sup> Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), “Anti-torture Committee issues public statement on Azerbaijan”, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 3 July 2024, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/anti-torture-committee-cpt-issues-public-statement-on-azerbaijan>

In addition to Ulvi Hasanli, three other journalists, Nargiz Absalamova, Sevinj Vagifgizi, and Elnara Gasimova have complained officially about the physical abuse and inhumane treatment they have faced in custody.<sup>16</sup>

Accounts from Sevinj Vagifgizi, Elnara Gasimova and Nargiz Absalamova allege they have suffered practices of intimidation, violence and restraint techniques used by prison guards resulting in visible bruises. Their testimonies also document inhuman conditions of detention, including denial of clean water and sanitation.<sup>17</sup>

The journalists Aynur Ganbarova, Aytaj Ahmadova and Natig Javadli arrested in the MeydanTV case complained that on 2 April 2025 before their trial to prolong their detention, they were brought to court 8 am, and held without food and water until the evening. According to Natig Javadli, they did not have their handcuffs removed during this period.<sup>18</sup>

## DETERIORATING HEALTH AND DENIAL OF HEALTHCARE

Several detained journalists in Azerbaijan are enduring severe health issues exacerbated by poor detention conditions and the denial of adequate healthcare.

The health of journalist Aziz Orujov, sentenced to two years' imprisonment on 28 February 2025, has reportedly worsened in prison. His family members report that Aziz suffers from heart conditions, high blood pressure and neurological issues. He was held in inhuman conditions during his first imprisonment in 2017.<sup>19</sup>

The media expert and founder of Toplum TV, Alasgar Mammadli was arrested on 8 March 2024 outside a clinic where he was scheduled to get tested for suspected thyroid cancer, and remanded in detention under Article 206.3.2 (smuggling committed by a group of individuals by prior arrangement). Alasgar Mammadli's condition continued to deteriorate in detention, as he experienced pain and swelling of his thyroid gland, as well as difficulty breathing during sleep. In June 2024, the authorities granted his lawyer's request to conduct a medical examination in an outside hospital. On 22 June 2024 the procedure took place at a private clinic, which diagnosed the benign nature of the tumor. However, law enforcement officials did not allow him to undergo other necessary tests. According to Alasgar Mammadli's brother, Nasimi Mammadli, he was not allowed to undergo examination by the doctor of his choice and was denied his privacy during the procedure. Therefore, Alasgar Mammadli and his family believe that the results are insufficient for an accurate diagnosis.<sup>20</sup>

Hafiz Babali, an investigative journalist sentenced to nine years in the Abzas Media case, filed a complaint with the Ombudsman's Office about the lack of healthcare for his varicose veins, in

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<sup>16</sup> Abzas Media, “‘Abzasçılar’ məhkəmədə iştirakdan imtina etdilər”, 11 February 2025, <https://abzas.org/en/2025/2/abzasclar-mhkmd-istirakf38bf8fe-6>

<sup>17</sup> Abzas Media, “Sevinc Vagifgizi subjected to violence again in detention facility”, 23 January 2025, <https://abzas.org/en/2025/1/sevinc-vaqifqz-tcridxanada86456409-c/>

<sup>18</sup> Meydan TV, “Journalists arrested in the ‘Meydan TV Case’ complain about mistreatment”, 3 April 2025, <https://www.meydan.tv/en/article/journalists-arrested-in-the-meydan-tv-case-complain-about-mistreatment>

<sup>19</sup> Amnesty International, “Azerbaijan: Detained journalist faints in overheated prison: Aziz Orujov”, Urgent Action, 28 July 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur55/6826/2017/en/>

<sup>20</sup> 'Toplum TV case - Alasgar Mammadli', JAMnews, <https://jam-news.net/toplum-tv-case-alasgar-mammadli/>

November 2024.<sup>21</sup> While tests were conducted and medication prescribed, his family reported in June 2025 that sufficient treatment was not provided in detention and surgery is required.

## IMPACT ON FAMILIES

The authorities' crackdown is not limited to pressuring journalists alone; it often extends to targeting their families as well.

Family members may face harassment, and financial assets can be arbitrarily frozen, adding immense psychological and economic pressure.

The tactic of freezing assets, when it does not serve any lawful objective, represents a form of reprisal, aiming to harass and silence not only critics of the government, but also their families and associates.

For example, in the case of Abzas Media, the authorities misused the system to freeze the bank accounts of some of the detained employees and journalists, preventing them from accessing their salaries, pensions, and other financial assets. Ofelya Maharramova, the mother of Sevinj Vagifgizi, said she was unable to afford essential medication due to her pension and health/disability benefits being frozen. The families of Ulvi Hasanli, Abzas Media director, and Aziz Orujov, head of Kanal 13, face severe financial hardship as their bank accounts have been frozen in apparent retaliation for their relatives' journalistic activities.<sup>22</sup>

Restrictions on family visits and communication with imprisoned relatives have significantly impacted detainees and their families: visits are often restricted to short, monitored sessions behind glass barriers; there are delays in accessing detained journalists and artificial barriers that prevent safe and adequate communication of the detained activists with their families and lawyers.

In the case of Nargiz Absalamova, Elnara Gasimova and Sevinj Vagifgizi, the prison authorities limited the minutes they could speak to their families on the phone after they had complained about pressure and provocation they had faced in November 2024.<sup>23</sup> In June 2025, phone calls with families were reported to be cut off when Sevinj Vagifgizi and Elnara Gasimova told their relatives that they would join the hunger strike in solidarity with their director, Ulvi Hasanli.<sup>24</sup> Ulvi Hasanli started a hunger strike after he was transferred to the Umbaki prison, which he and the other male journalists convicted in the Abzas media case were sent after the verdict was announced. According to their lawyers, the journalists should not have been transferred before the Appeal Court had considered the case. On 20 July 2025, Ulvi Hasanli announced that he would restart the hunger strike he ended after nine days, as he has still not been transferred back to the previous facility. Hasanli has complained that the Umbaki prison is 55-60 km from the

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<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International, No Sign of Hope for the Human Rights Situation in Azerbaijan: Systemic and Serious Breaches of Human Rights Must be Strongly Condemned, January 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/EUR5589632025ENGLISH.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Amnesty International, "Azerbaijan: Update: The Human Rights Situation in Azerbaijan ahead of COP29", 1 November 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur55/8703/2024/en/>

<sup>23</sup> Amnesty International, No Sign of Hope for the Human Rights Situation in Azerbaijan: Systemic and Serious Breaches of Human Rights Must be Strongly Condemned, January 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/EUR5589632025ENGLISH.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Abzas Media, "Three Abzas Media journalists on hunger strike in protest over Ulvi Hasanli's transfer", 4 July 2025, <https://abzas.org/en/2025/7/three-abzas-media-journalists3b3eefa2-f/>

capital Baku which makes it difficult for lawyers and families to visit him and his journalist colleagues.<sup>25</sup>

RFE journalist Farid Mehralizada's daughter was born while he was in detention. His lawyer requested his transfer to house arrest, to be reunited with his family and to meet his daughter for the first time, but this request was not granted.<sup>26</sup>

## RESILIENCE AND THE FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Yet, despite the ordeals faced by journalists and their families, critical media workers remain committed to the ideals of protecting human rights and freedoms.

**“By imprisoning us, the government tried to extinguish the light that shows what is really happening in the country. But what happened instead? We shone that light into places they had long kept hidden — into the detention centers and prisons.”** From the last words at the court hearing on 20 June 2025 of Nargiz Absalamova, journalist from Abzas Media sentenced to eight years' imprisonment.<sup>27</sup>

Being a journalist critical of the authorities in Azerbaijan means living under constant threat, risking personal freedom in order to preserve professional integrity, and enduring severe hardship, all in the pursuit of information, transparency and accountability.

**“How could I sit quietly on the days when my colleagues were arrested for doing honest journalism? (...) If I had known that the place I would go to is prison, that all independent journalists would be branded smugglers, nothing I have done so far would change.”** Fatima Movlamli, an independent journalist arrested in relation to the Meydan TV case.<sup>28</sup>

After spending nearly a month in pretrial detention, journalist Ulviyya Ali wrote in a letter published by JAMnews: “It pains me that, while under arrest, neither I nor other journalists can carry out full-fledged investigative reporting on the latest shocking cases of social and legal injustice in Azerbaijan.”<sup>29</sup>

Despite the immense challenges, journalists in Azerbaijan demonstrate remarkable resilience. They continue to report on critical issues, expose abuses, and advocate for human rights, often from behind bars. Their unwavering commitment highlights their crucial role in a society where independent voices are constantly suppressed.

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<sup>25</sup> Ulvi Hasanli, post on Facebook, 21 July 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1BjbCoUZQP/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

<sup>26</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “RFE/RL Journalist Farid Mehralizada Sentenced to Nine Years in Prison in Azerbaijan”, 20 June 2025, <https://about.rferl.org/article/rfe-rl-journalist-farid-mehralizada-sentenced-to-nine-years-in-prison-in-azerbaijan/>

<sup>27</sup> Nargiz Absalamova, “Being a journalist in a country like Azerbaijan means fighting,” statement in court, 25 June 2025, <https://abzas.org/en/2025/6/nargiz-absalamovaa406f357-5/>

<sup>28</sup> OCCRP, “The Death of Journalism in Azerbaijan”, <https://www.occrp.org/en/feature/the-death-of-journalism-in-azerbaijan>

<sup>29</sup> JAMnews, “There are no independent media in Azerbaijan, and no one left to report injustice.” Ulviyya Ali's letter from prison”, <https://jam-news.net/there-are-no-independent-media-in-azerbaijan-and-no-one-left-to-report-injustice-ulviyya-alis-letter-from-prison/>

## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON THE AZERBAIJANI AUTHORITIES TO:**

- immediately and unconditionally release all journalists detained or imprisoned under politically-motivated charges in retaliation for their criticism of the authorities, overturn their convictions and drop all unfounded criminal charges against them;
- pending their release, ensure they, and all persons in detention, are provided with access to adequate healthcare, and are not subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- investigate all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in custody, as reported by journalists and other persons, and bring all those suspected of being responsible for these human rights violations to justice in fair trial proceedings;
- without any further delay, implement the Council of Europe CPT's recommendations;
- end reprisals against dissenting voices and stop immediately the clampdown on civil society and independent media, including arbitrary denial of registration, arbitrary arrests and unfounded prosecution of media workers and civil society representatives, and any undue restrictions, in accordance with international law and standards;
- end reprisals against family members of detained journalists and government critics, including the practice of arbitrary freezing of their financial assets;
- publicly commit to upholding and ensuring respect for human rights including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;
- repeal the restrictive Media Law, including excessive registration and reporting requirements resulting in effective censorship;
- fully and effectively cooperate with the Council of Europe, and respect all key commitments as required by its membership, including by enabling country visits by the relevant Council of Europe bodies and mechanisms.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

- Raise human rights concerns with the government of Azerbaijan, at every opportunity, and demand:
  - an immediate release of all journalists who have been detained and prosecuted under unfounded, politically-motivated charges;
  - an immediate revision or repeal of the overly restrictive legislation governing freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, to ensure full compliance with Azerbaijan's commitments under international law;
  - an immediate end of all practices that unduly restrict, deny or undermine the enjoyment of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and all human rights by any person in Azerbaijan.
- Request and organize prison visits by independent monitors and diplomats to imprisoned Azerbaijani journalists.
- Raise awareness about the reprisals against critical voices and free media in Azerbaijan.

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Index: **EUR 55/0128/2025**

Publication: **July 2025**

Original language: **English**

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