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AZERBAIJAN

RELEASE ARRESTED JOURNALISTS

At least fourteen journalists have been arrested in Azerbaijan on charges that appear to be fabricated in response to their critical reporting. Among them is Imran Aliyev, a journalist and founder of the parliamentary watchdog website Meclis.info, who was arrested on April 8. Many of these journalists, including Aliyev, have reportedly been subjected to ill-treatment. They should be immediately released.

Write to the President of the Azerbaijan urging him to:

- Take steps to immediately release all journalists arrested for their critical reporting, including on charges of smuggling and extortion.
- Ensure an effective investigation into their allegations of ill-treatment.
- Stop the clampdown on media freedom.

Write to:

Ilham Aliyev
President of Azerbaijan
19 Istiqlaliyyat Street
Baku AZ1066, Azerbaijan
Email: office@pa.gov.az
Salutation: Your Excellency:

And copy:

Mr. Vasif Cingiz Oglu Abutalibov
Chargé d'affaires, a.i.
Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan
275 Slater Street, Suite 1203
Ottawa, ON K1P 5H9
CanadaTel: (613) 288-0497 Fax: (613) 230-8089
Email: reception@azembassy.ca

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The crackdown on independent media in Azerbaijan has recently intensified, with multiple journalists and media outlets targeted.

On November 20, 2023, police raided the office of AbzasMedia in Baku, alleging they found 40,000 euros in cash, claimed to be a grant amount illegally brought into the country. Ulvi Hasanli, the director of AbzasMedia, accused the police of planting the money and reported being beaten and ill-treated in detention. Mahammad Kekalov, the deputy director, was held incommunicado for 48 hours and pressured to renounce his lawyer. In the first three months of their detention, they were denied family

visits and lawyer calls. Prior to the arrests, AbzasMedia had reported on alleged corruption involving government officials and was planning to investigate gold mine pollution and other human rights abuses.

In December, Aziz Orujov and Shamo Eminov of Kanal 13 were remanded on charges of smuggling grant money, similar to the accusations against AbzasMedia. The court also blocked online access to [Kanal 13](#), which had been a platform for political opposition and covered various human rights issues.

Additionally, at least three other journalists were arrested on extortion charges under Article 182. These include Teymur Karimov of Kanal11, Arshad Ibrahimov from Dunyaninsesi.az in Ganja, and Ibrahim Humbatov of Azerinfo.az.

On March 7, 2024, [police raided Toplum TV](#), the Institute of Democratic Initiatives, and the Platform for the Third Republic, an opposition group. Approximately a dozen journalists and activists were detained. Toplum TV founder Alasgar Mammadli and journalist Mushfig Jabbar remain in detention on smuggling charges, while others have been released pending trial.

In recent years, Azerbaijan has passed restrictive amendments regulating media and NGOs, setting the stage for legal actions and prosecutions. The 2022 media law imposes arbitrary barriers on media registration and funding. Many critical outlets and journalists are denied registration on arbitrary grounds, forcing them either to shut down or face prosecution for continuing their work or accepting grants.

Please take action as soon as possible until June 20, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.