

Urgent Action Office 3-1992 Yonge Street Toronto ON M4S 1Z7 Phone: (416) 363-9933 Fax: (416) 363-3103 [urgentaction@amnesty.ca](mailto:urgentaction@amnesty.ca)  
Second UA: 31/24 Index: EUR 55/8718/2024 Azerbaijan of November 5, 2024

## **AZERBAIJAN**

### **JOURNALISTS FACE NEW CHARGES AND EXTENDED DETENTIONS**

Ahead of the COP29, Azerbaijani authorities have filed new charges and extended the detention of six journalists from the investigative outlet Abzas Media. These journalists have already been held for over ten months. Two report suffering torture, mistreatment, and denial of essential medical care. This intensified crackdown on media and independent voices in Azerbaijan demands immediate international action to protect press freedom and human rights.

#### **Write to the President of Azerbaijan urging him to:**

- Ensure the immediate release of all journalists detained in retaliation for their critical reporting.
- Conduct effective investigations into all allegations of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.
- Investigate claims of fabricated charges against journalists and independent voices.
- Hold accountable those responsible for committing, commissioning, or condoning these and other human rights violations, ensuring they face fair trial proceedings.
- End the crackdown on media and other independent voices in Azerbaijan immediately.

#### **Write to:**

President of Azerbaijan  
Ilham Aliyev Office of the President of Azerbaijan  
19 Istiqlaliyyat Street  
Baku AZ1066,  
Azerbaijan  
Email: [office@pa.gov.az](mailto:office@pa.gov.az)  
*Salutation: Dear President Aliyev,*

#### **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  
Tel: (613) 288-0497 Fax: (613) 230-8089  
Email: [reception@azembassy.ca](mailto:reception@azembassy.ca)

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Since November 2023, Azerbaijani authorities have detained six journalists from Abzas Media, including Director Ulvi Hasanli, his deputy Mahammad Kekalov, and Editor-in-Chief Sevinj Vagifgizi. They were initially accused of money smuggling and, later, additional charges of illegal entrepreneurship, money laundering, and tax evasion were added in August 2024. These charges,

which carry potential prison sentences of 8 to 12 years, are widely seen as attempts to silence their critical reporting. The journalists deny all charges, which appear aimed at stifling press freedom. Hasanli has reported threats and physical abuse in detention, including being beaten by law enforcement in front of his colleague Sevinj Vagifgizi. Another journalist, Hafiz Babali, requires surgery and medical care, which he has not received in prison.

Abzas Media has exposed alleged corruption involving government-linked companies and investigated environmental issues, including severe pollution from the Gedabek gold mine in Gabaday district. Before the arrests, the outlet planned further investigations into pollution and other human rights issues. Despite government pressure, Abzas Media continued its work, shedding light on public health and environmental risks in Azerbaijan. This critical reporting has led to backlash, including arrests and detention of Abzas Media staff.

Azerbaijan's government has intensified its crackdown on media and dissent ahead of hosting COP29. This is part of a broader effort to stifle independent voices, similar to prior crackdowns before other major international events in the country. In recent months, several journalists and activists, including Imran Aliyev and Kanal 13's Director Aziz Orujov, have been detained on similar politically motivated charges. In 2022, a new media law imposed further restrictions, preventing independent media from registering and receiving funds. The crackdown on media and freedom of expression continues to threaten human rights and press freedom in Azerbaijan.

***Please take action as soon as possible until December 30, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***