



Azerbaijan releases blogger; two reporters still in prison

New York, November 18, 2010--After the Baku Appeals Court [released blogger Adnan Hajizade](#) today, the Committee to Protect Journalists urged Azerbaijani authorities to release two other imprisoned journalists, Emin Milli and Eynulla Fatullayev. Both Milli and Fatullayev have their appeals pending at the same court.

The Baku court overturned a lower court's decision to deny Hajizade [early release](#), and ordered him to be freed on parole, local and international press reported. According to [Reuters](#), the court did not acquit Hajizade.

Authorities [arrested](#) Milli and Hajizade, bloggers and youth activists, in July 2009 after they tried to report an attack on them at a local restaurant to authorities. A district court in Baku [convicted them](#) in November 2009 on charges of hooliganism and inflicting of minor bodily harm. Hajizade was given a two-year prison sentence; Milli was given two and a half years. CPJ has concluded that Hajizade and Milli were jailed in retaliation for a satirical video they produced and posted on YouTube in June 2009.

[Hajizade told](#) the U.S. government-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that the appeals court is due to review Milli's appeal on Friday. On November 22, the court will hear Fatullayev's appeal of the trumped-up drug possession charges [he was given](#) in December 2009.

"We are relieved that Adnan Hajizade has been released on parole," CPJ Deputy Director Robert Mahoney said. "Azerbaijan can now take itself off the list of countries that imprison journalists by freeing Emin Milli and Eynulla Fatullayev."

[Cleared](#) on November 11 of the fictitious charges of [terrorism, defamation, and incitement to ethnic hatred](#) following the [mandatory ruling](#) by the European Court of Human Rights, Fatullayev is still in jail. Anticipating the European Court's order, Azerbaijani authorities announced in December 2009 they had found drugs in Fatullayev's prison cell and [convicted him](#) on drug possession charges in July.

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