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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

AZERBAIJAN

23 MARCH 2007

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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION SERVICE

Contents

	Page
1. PREFACE	3
2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT AZERBAIJAN.....	5
Geography	5
Maps	6
Recent history	7
Recent events and political developments.....	7
Economy	7
Human Rights	8
3. INDEX TO KEY SOURCE DOCUMENTS	9
Key facts and geography.....	9
Maps	9
History	9
Politics and recent developments	10
Human Rights – general	11
Human Rights – specific issues	11
Arrest and Detention – Legal Rights.....	11
Children	12
Citizenship	12
Corruption	12
Crime	12
Death Penalty	12
Disability	12
Employment Rights.....	13
Ethnic groups.....	13
Exit-Entry Procedures.....	13
Foreign Refugees	13
Freedom of Movement.....	13
Freedom of religion	13
Freedom of speech and media	14
Human Rights institutions, organisations and activists	14
Internally displaced persons (IDPs)	14
Judiciary.....	15
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons	15
Medical issues	15
Military service	15
Nagorno-Karabakh	16
OPON	16
Political affiliation	16
Prison conditions	17
Security forces	17
Terrorism	17
Trafficking	17
Women	18
4. REFERENCES TO SOURCE MATERIAL	19

1. Preface

- i This Country of Origin Information (COI) Key Documents has been produced by Research, Development and Statistics (RDS), Home Office, for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 23 March 2007.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.
- iii For Home Office users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Azerbaijan is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the key documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional documents are very welcome and should be submitted to the Home Office as below.

Country of Origin Information Service

Home Office
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Website: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html

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It is not the function of the Advisory Panel to endorse any Home Office material or procedures. In the course of its work, the Advisory Panel directly reviews the content of selected Home Office COI documents, but neither the

fact that such a review has been undertaken, nor any comments made, should be taken to imply endorsement of the material. Some of the material examined by the Panel relates to countries designated or proposed for designation for the Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA) list. In such cases, the Panel's work should not be taken to imply any endorsement of the decision or proposal to designate a particular country for NSA, nor of the NSA process itself.

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[Return to Contents](#)

2. Background information on Azerbaijan

Full Country Name: The Republic of Azerbaijan

Population: 8.3 million

Capital City: Baku 1.8 million

People: Predominantly Turkic Azeri, Russian 8%, Armenian 6%

Languages: Azeri 89%, Russian 3%, Armenian 2%, other 6%

Religion(s): Muslim 93.4%, Russian Orthodox 2.5 %, Armenian Orthodox 2.3%, other 1.8%

Currency: Manat

Major Political Parties: New Azerbaijan Party, Azerbaijan Democratic Party, Popular Front Party (Reformists), Musavat, Liberal Party and Azerbaijan National Independence Party

Government: Republic

Head of State: President Ilham Aliev

Prime Minister/Premier: Artur Rasizade

Foreign Minister: Elmar Mamadyarov

Membership of International Groupings/Organisations: BSEC, CCC, CE, CIS, EAPC, EBRD, ECE, ECO, ESCAP, FAO, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCs, ILO, IMF, IMO, Intelsat, Interpol, IOC, ISO (correspondent), ITU, NAM (observer), OIC, OPCW, OSCE, PFP, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UPU, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO (observer) (FCO Country Profile, last updated 26 July 2005) [4a]

[Return to Contents](#)

GEOGRAPHY

Azerbaijan is the largest of the three South Caucasus states, bounded by Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Iran and the Caspian Sea. There is also a short border between Turkey and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic (pop. 295,000), which is separated from the bulk of Azerbaijan by southern Armenia. Under Russo-Turkish treaty arrangements Nakhichevan's sovereignty cannot be transferred from Azerbaijan. In 1917 40% of the population of Nakhichevan was Armenian; by 1989 the figure was 0.6 percent (FCO Country Profile, last updated 26 July 2005). [4a]

[Return to Contents](#)

MAPS



Map courtesy of CIA World Fact Book



Map courtesy of Institute for War and Peace Reporting

RECENT HISTORY

In 1920 Azerbaijan was established as a Soviet Republic, and in 1936 became a full union republic of the USSR. In 1991 the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet voted to restore the country's independence. The first post-Soviet legislative elections, held in 1995, demonstrated widespread support for President Heydar Aliyev and his New Azerbaijan Party. Heydar Aliyev's son, İlham Aliyev, succeeded him as President, following a presidential election in late 2003. Azerbaijan's conflict with Armenia over the disputed enclave of Nagorny Karabakh remained unresolved in the early 21st century (Europa World Online, accessed 20 February 2007). [1a]

Armenia supports ethnic Armenian secessionists in Nagorno-Karabakh and since the early 1990s has militarily occupied 16% of Azerbaijan; over 800,000 mostly ethnic Azerbaijanis were driven from the occupied lands and Armenia; about 230,000 ethnic Armenians were driven from their homes in Azerbaijan into Armenia; Azerbaijan seeks transit route through Armenia to connect to Naxcivan exclave; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) continues to mediate dispute (CIA World Factbook, last updated 8 February 2007) [10a]

[Return to Contents](#)

RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

In November 2005 the ruling New Azerbaijan Party won parliamentary elections by a very large margin. International observers said that the vote failed to meet democratic standards. Police used violence to disperse opposition protesters demanding a rerun.

In July 2006 the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline was formally opened at a ceremony in Turkey after Caspian oil started flowing along it. In January 2007 the Azeri state oil company stopped pumping oil to Russia in a dispute over energy prices. (BBC Timeline) [7b]

[Return to Contents](#)

ECONOMY

GDP: US\$ 8.5bn (2004)

GDP per capita: US\$ 1,041 (2004)

Annual Growth: 10.2% (2004)

Inflation: 13.1% (Jan-Mar 2005 over Jan-Mar 2004)

Natural resources: petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, non-ferrous metals, alumina

Exchange rate: US\$1 = 4,829 Manat (at 15 April 2005) (FCO Country Profile, last updated 26 July 2005) [4a]

Growth is being fuelled by investment in Azerbaijani oil reserves. The State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan grew from US\$692 million on 1 January 2003 to US\$ 984 million by 31 March 2005. GDP grew by 10.6% in the first 3 months of 2005. Inflation over the same period has continued to increase significantly and is currently running at 13.1%. Food and energy prices are running at a higher rate of inflation.

Approximately 48% of people are estimated to live below the poverty line. The Government of Azerbaijan adopted a Poverty Reduction and Development Plan in

October 2002. The programme focuses on poverty reduction, increased growth in the non-oil sector, reduction of corruption, continuing strong monitoring of monetary policy, governance measures such as reform of the Cabinet of Ministers and improving expenditure control. (FCO Country Profile, last updated 26 July 2005) [4a]

[Return to Contents](#)

HUMAN RIGHTS

The United States Department of State 2006 Country Report on Azerbaijan stated that:

“The government's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit numerous abuses. The public's right to peacefully change the national legislature was restricted in the November 2005 parliamentary elections, although there were some improvements in the period leading up to the elections and in the May 13 parliamentary election reruns that took place in ten parliamentary constituencies. Torture and beating of persons in police custody resulted in three deaths, and police officials acted with impunity. Prison conditions – despite improvements in infrastructure – were generally harsh and life threatening. Arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of individuals considered by the government to be political opponents, and lengthy pretrial detention continued. The government continued to imprison persons for politically motivated reasons. Pervasive corruption in the judiciary and in law enforcement continued. Restrictions on media freedom, freedom of assembly, and political participation worsened.

“During the year, the government took several important steps to combat human trafficking, including establishing a shelter for victims of trafficking, and separating the antitrafficking special police unit from the organized crime unit.” [2a]

In their 2006 Annual Report on Human Rights, the FCO noted “Azerbaijan joined the Council of Europe in 2001 and signed the ECHR and its associated protocols. The government has made some progress on human rights, abolishing the death penalty in 1998 and establishing an ombudsman's office and a constitutional court in 2002...Despite these steps, Azerbaijan's human rights record remains poor. The judiciary does not function independently of the executive and is widely perceived to be inefficient and corrupt.” [4b]

The Human Rights Watch World Report 2007 stated that:

“Dozens of government officials, opposition politicians, and others arrested in November 2005 on charges of attempting to organize a coup remain in custody awaiting trial, and a few were sentenced. Torture in police custody, conditions of detention, and politically motivated arrests remain unresolved problems. Media freedom deteriorated, with violence against and arrests of journalists, as well as numerous defamation cases orchestrated by government officials. Many international actors publicly criticized the Azerbaijani government for its poor human rights record.” [5a]

[Return to Contents](#)

3. Index to key source documents

(KB users - click source number to access document directly)

KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY	[1a]	Europa World Online Subscription only http://www.europaworld.com/entry?id=az&go_country=GO
	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
	[4a]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Azerbaijan, published 14 January 2007 http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Servlet?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019233781986
	[4b]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights Annual Report 2006 http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/hr_report2006.pdf
	[5a]	Human Rights Watch World Report 2007: Azerbaijan http://hrw.org/englishwr2k7/docs/2007/01/11/azerba14789.htm
	[7a]	BBC News, Country Profile: Azerbaijan, Last updated 18 October 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1235976.stm
	[7b]	BBC News, Timeline: Azerbaijan, published 10 January 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1235740.stm
	[10a]	Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, Azerbaijan, last updated 8 February 2007 https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/aj.html
	[17a]	Ethnologue, Languages of the World, Languages of Azerbaijan http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=AZ
MAPS	[19a]	United Nations Cartographic Section, Map on Azerbaijan http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/htmain.htm
	[27a]	Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) – Caucasus Maps and Country Profiles: Map of Caucasus http://www.iwpr.net/index.php?apc_state=henocrslocal_caucasus/caucasus_programme_index.html&s=o&o=caucasus_map.html
HISTORY	[1a]	Europa World Online Subscription only http://www.europaworld.com/entry?id=az&go_country=GO
	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
	[2c]	United States Department of State, Background Note:

HISTORY CONT'D		<p>Azerbaijan, last updated July 2006 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2909.htm#gov</p> <p>[4a] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Azerbaijan, published 14 January 2007 http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019233781986</p> <p>[7a] BBC Country Profile: Azerbaijan, Last updated 18 October 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1235976.stm</p> <p>[7b] BBC Timeline: Azerbaijan, published 10 January 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1235740.stm</p> <p>[25a] Freedom in the World 2006: Azerbaijan http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6915</p>
POLITICS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS		<p>[1a] Europa World Online Subscription only http://www.europaworld.com/entry?id=az&go_country=GO</p> <p>[2a] United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm</p> <p>[2c] United States Department of State, Background Note: Azerbaijan, last updated July 2006 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2909.htm#gov</p> <p>[4a] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Azerbaijan, published 14 January 2007 http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019233781986</p> <p>[5a] Human Rights Watch World Report 2007: Azerbaijan http://hrw.org/englishwr2k7/docs/2007/01/11/azerba14789.htm</p> <p>[7a] BBC Country Profile: Azerbaijan, Last updated 18 October 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1235976.stm</p> <p>[7b] BBC Timeline: Azerbaijan, published 10 January 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1235740.stm</p> <p>[11a] Amnesty International, Annual Human Rights report 2006: Azerbaijan, Covering events from January to December 2005 http://web.amnesty.org/web/web.nsf/print/CCE90DE11C7CED0E80257163004612F3</p> <p>[23a] International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights in the OSCE Region, Europe, Central Asia and North America, Report 2006 (Events of 2005), Azerbaijan</p>

POLITICS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS CONT'D	[25a]	http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4255
	[25a]	Freedom in the World 2006: Azerbaijan http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6915
	[25c]	Countries at the Crossroads 2006: Azerbaijan http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=140&edition=7&ccrpage=31&ccrcountry=110
HUMAN RIGHTS - GENERAL:	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
	[4a]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Azerbaijan, published 14 January 2007 http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019233781986
	[4b]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights Annual Report 2006 http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/hr_report2006.pdf
	[5a]	Human Rights Watch World Report 2007: Azerbaijan http://hrw.org/englishwr2k7/docs/2007/01/11/azerba14789.htm
	[11a]	Amnesty International, Annual Human Rights report 2006: Azerbaijan, Covering events from January to December 2005 http://web.amnesty.org/web/web.nsf/print/CCE90DE11C7CED0E80257163004612F3
	[20a]	Council of Europe, Azerbaijan and the Council of Europe, updated 31 January 2007 http://www.coe.int/T/E/Com/About_Coe/Member_states/e_az.asp#TopOfPage
	[23a]	International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights in the OSCE Region, Europe, Central Asia and North America, Report 2006 (Events of 2005), Azerbaijan http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4255
	[25a]	Freedom in the World 2006: Azerbaijan http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6915
	[25c]	Countries at the Crossroads 2006: Azerbaijan http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=140&edition=7&ccrpage=31&ccrcountry=110
HUMAN RIGHTS – SPECIFIC ISSUES: (IN ADDITION TO GENERAL REPORTS ABOVE, INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IS PROVIDED IN THE DOCUMENTS LISTED BELOW)		
ARREST AND DETENTION – LEGAL RIGHTS	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007

ARREST AND DETENTION – LEGAL RIGHT CONT'D	[23a]	http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights in the OSCE Region, Europe, Central Asia and North America, Report 2006 (Events of 2005), Azerbaijan http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4255
	[25a]	Freedom in the World 2006: Azerbaijan http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6915
CHILDREN	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
	[2d]	United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report, September 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/
	[15a]	Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Global Report 2004: Azerbaijan http://www.child-soldiers.org/resources/global-reports?root_id=159&category_id=165
CITIZENSHIP	[26d]	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa, Canada, Azerbaijan: What is the current status of the Law on Citizenship; whether dual citizenship is permitted; whether special conditions exist for ethnic groups; what are the conditions for loss of citizenship (2004 - 2005) http://www.cisr-irb.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450214
CORRUPTION	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
	[16a]	Transparency International, Corruption Protection Index 2006 http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2006
CRIME	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
DEATH PENALTY	[11b]	Amnesty International, Abolitionist and Retentionist countries, last updated 6 March 2007 http://web.amnesty.org/pages/deathpenalty-countries-eng
DISABILITY	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
ETHNIC GROUPS	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
	[2c]	Background Note: Azerbaijan, last updated July 2006 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2909.htm#gov
	[10a]	Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, Azerbaijan, last updated 8 February 2007 https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/aj.html
	[23a]	International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights in the OSCE Region, Europe, Central Asia and North America, Report 2006 (Events of 2005), Azerbaijan http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4255
	[25a]	Freedom in the World 2006: Azerbaijan http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6915
	[26a]	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa, Canada Azerbaijan: Treatment of ethnic Russians (2004 - 2006) http://www.cisr-irb.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&qotorec=449896
EXIT-ENTRY PROCEDURES	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
FOREIGN REFUGEES	[23a]	International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights in the OSCE Region, Europe, Central Asia and North America, Report 2006 (Events of 2005), Azerbaijan http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4255
FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT	[23a]	International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights in the OSCE Region, Europe, Central Asia and North America, Report 2006 (Events of 2005), Azerbaijan http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4255
FREEDOM OF RELIGION	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
	[2b]	United States Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report 2006, Azerbaijan, released 15 September 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71368.htm
	[23a]	International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Human

FREEDOM OF RELIGION CONT'D		Rights in the OSCE Region, Europe, Central Asia and North America, Report 2006 (Events of 2005), Azerbaijan http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4255
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	[25a]	Freedom in the World 2006: Azerbaijan http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6915
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	[5a]	Human Rights Watch World Report 2007: Azerbaijan http://hrw.org/englishwr2k7/docs/2007/01/11/azerba14789.htm
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	[9a]	Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Attacks on the Press in 2006 – Azerbaijan http://www.cpj.org/attacks06/europe06/azer06.html
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	[14a]	Reporters sans Frontieres (Reporters without Borders): Annual Report 2006: Azerbaijan, 3 May 2006 http://www.rsf.org/print.php3?id_article=17335
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	[23a]	International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights in the OSCE Region, Europe, Central Asia and North America, Report 2006 (Events of 2005), Azerbaijan http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4255
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	[25a]	Freedom in the World 2006: Azerbaijan http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6915
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	[25b]	Freedom House, Freedom of the Press 2006: Azerbaijan http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2006
HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND ACTIVISTS	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND ACTIVISTS	[25a]	Freedom in the World 2006: Azerbaijan http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6915
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs)	[2a]	United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs)	[3a]	The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Azerbaijan at a glance http://www.unicef.org/azerbaijan/about_2976.html
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs)	[21a]	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Azerbaijan: IDP living conditions improve, but peace deal remains elusive, updated March 2007 http://www.internal-

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs) CONT'D		<p>displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpCountrySummaries)/91F1A7EA6DD0A38B802570C00056B6E4?OpenDocument&count=10000</p> <p>[22a] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Country Operations Plan 2006, Azerbaijan http://www.unhcr.org/home/RSDCOI/434286e32.pdf</p> <p>[23a] International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights in the OSCE Region, Europe, Central Asia and North America, Report 2006 (Events of 2005), Azerbaijan http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4255</p>
JUDICIARY	<p>[2a]</p> <p>[2c]</p> <p>[25a]</p>	<p>United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Azerbaijan, published 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78801.htm</p> <p>Background Note: Azerbaijan, last updated July 2006 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2909.htm#gov</p> <p>Freedom in the World 2006: Azerbaijan http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6915</p>
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[Return to Contents](#)