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Europe/Ex-USSR - Azerbaijan

Joint Statement

Another journalist falls victim to persecution of independent media

4 November 2014

On 30 October a Baku court sentenced opposition journalist Khalid Garayev to 25 days in detention on trumped-up charges of hooliganism and disobeying the police, dealing a new blow to Azerbaijan's independent media at a time when its civil society is being subjected to an unprecedented crackdown.

A reporter for the leading opposition daily [Azadlig](#) and producer of "[Azerbaijan Saati](#)," a TV programme linked to the newspaper that is broadcast by satellite from abroad, Garayev was sentenced just a day after his arrest.

[ARTICLE19](#), the [European Federation of Journalists](#), [Freedom House](#), [Index on Censorship](#), [International Media Support](#), [Media Diversity Institute](#), [Reporters Without Borders](#) and the [World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers](#) – all members of the [International Partnership Group on Azerbaijan \(IPGA\)](#) – call for Garayev's release on appeal and condemn the witchhunt against journalists who work for *Azadlig* and "*Azerbaijan Saati*."

[Arrested](#) on the evening of 29 October in the Baku suburb of Binagadi, Garayev was charged under articles 296 and 310.1 of the Code of Administrative Offences. The indictment said he was heard using vulgar language outside a supermarket in the centre of Binagadi and refused to comply with instructions from the police.

Appearing in court on 30 October, one of the two prosecution witnesses was a person who is apparently systematically used by the police in similar cases. The court rejected the defence's request to view surveillance camera footage.

The sentence of 25 days in prison is close to the maximum of 30 days for such offences, for which [the penalty](#) can be just a fine. Garayev and his lawyer, Bakhriz Bayramov, accused the authorities of fabricating the entire case just to punish Garayev for his journalistic activities.

Azadlig and "*Azerbaijan Saati*" have long been subjected to harassment. The newspaper, which is being [throttled economically](#), has had to [suspend its print edition](#) on several occasions and is now near to closure. Its editor, [Ganimat Zahid](#), spent [two and a half years in prison](#), from November 2007 to March 2010, on similarly trumped-up charges.

Amid mounting repression, the staff of "*Azerbaijan Saati*" have been singled out in recent months and one of its presenters, **Seymour Khazi**, has been [in pre-trial custody](#) since 29 August and is facing the possibility of three to seven years in prison on a charge of "aggravated hooliganism."

A colleague, **Natig Adilov**, fled the country after [his brother was arrested](#) in August.

For more information about the crackdown on Azerbaijan's civil society, read the recent IPGA report "[Azerbaijan: when the truth becomes a lie](#)."

Signatories:

- ARTICLE19
- European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)
- Index on Censorship
- International Media Support (IMS)
- Freedom House
- Media Diversity Institute (MDI)

- Reporters Without Borders
 - World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)
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You can download those documents on our website :

- Azerbaijan: When the truth becomes a lie, (PDF - 1.6 Mb)
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