



For immediate release – 1 March 2011

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Azerbaijan: Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Must Demand Journalist's Release**

**Strasbourg 01.03.11: The International Partnership Group for Azerbaijan is calling on the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers to fulfil its mandate by demanding the immediate release of imprisoned Azerbaijani journalist Eynulla Fatullayev during its 8-10 March human rights meeting. Fatullayev remains wrongfully imprisoned despite a European Court of Human Rights ruling in April 2010 ordering his immediate release.**

*“It’s time for the Committee of Ministers to hold the Azerbaijani government to account for complying with the European Court’s decision in this case. The Azerbaijani authorities’ continued persecution of Fatullayev for political reasons is a breach of Azerbaijan’s commitments under the European Convention on Human Rights”,* commented Dr Agnès Callamard, Executive Director of ARTICLE 19.

Representatives from ARTICLE 19, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Index on Censorship, and the Media Rights Institute will travel as a delegation to the Council of Europe from 1-3 March to raise their concerns regarding Azerbaijan’s failure to execute the European Court’s judgment in Fatullayev’s case with Committee of Ministers delegations. Rather than releasing Fatullayev, the Azerbaijani authorities continue to hold him in prison on a politically motivated charge of drug possession.

The visit by these press freedom groups coincides with the sixth anniversary of the unsolved murder in 2005 of Elmar Huseynov, editor-in-chief of *Monitor* magazine. Huseynov was shot dead by unidentified attackers following his publication of a series of articles critical of the Azerbaijani authorities.

Since Huseynov’s murder, a climate of violence against journalists, impunity for their attackers, and persecution and imprisonment of government critics has emerged in Azerbaijan. Fatullayev, who was Huseynov’s deputy editor at *Monitor*, has refused to give up the search for Huseynov’s murderers. Even from his prison cell, he continues to provide a rare critical voice in a media climate dominated by pro-governmental views.

*“Azerbaijan has become a dangerous place to express critical opinions. We need bodies like the Council of Europe to help safeguard our right to freedom of expression before it’s too late. Next week’s human rights meeting is an excellent opportunity for the Committee of Ministers to take a tougher stance”,* said Rashid Hajili, Director of the Media Rights Institute.

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**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- For more information or to arrange an interview with spokespersons please contact Mona Samari at +44 (0)7515 828939 or [mona@article19.org](mailto:mona@article19.org).
- The International Partnership Group for Azerbaijan is a coalition of 20 international NGOs working to promote and protect freedom of expression in Azerbaijan. For more information about the Partnership, please contact Rebecca Vincent at +44 (0)207 324 2500 or [rebecca@article19.org](mailto:rebecca@article19.org).