



International
Press
Institute



For immediate release: 17 March 2011

PRESS RELEASE

Azerbaijan: Following Committee of Ministers' Decision, International Organisations Call for Fatullayev's Release

London 17.03.11: The International Partnership Group for Azerbaijan welcomes the recent decision of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers calling for the Azerbaijani authorities to execute the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of imprisoned Azerbaijani journalist Eynulla Fatullayev. The group is deeply concerned that Fatullayev remains wrongfully imprisoned and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

"Azerbaijan has blatantly flouted its international commitments by keeping Fatullayev behind bars. This not only undermines the Council of Europe's credibility but erodes press freedom for all Council members. Sanctions are appropriate if Azerbaijan continues to mock the rule of law and hold Fatullayev", said Nina Ognanova of the Committee to Protect Journalists.

The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers released its second decision regarding the case of *Fatullayev v. Azerbaijan* on 11 March 2011, following the Committee's debate on the case during its human rights meeting. In the decision, the Committee "noted with serious concern" that Fatullayev remained in prison and called on the Azerbaijani authorities "to remove without further delay" all obstacles to the implementation of the European Court's judgment in his case.

"The Azerbaijani authorities have taken every possible step to ensure that Fatullayev remains in prison, wilfully misinterpreting a European Court ruling in his favour and ignoring international condemnation. His continued detention reveals a government utterly hostile to free expression and unwilling to honour its commitments to human rights", said Natasha Schmidt of Index on Censorship.

Fatullayev, a well-known newspaper editor and investigative reporter, has been wrongfully imprisoned since April 2007 on charges related to his journalistic activities. In April 2010, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that his imprisonment violated his rights to freedom of expression and to a fair trial and ordered his immediate release. Rather than release Fatullayev, the Azerbaijani authorities proceeded with a new politically motivated charge of drug possession, for which he currently remains in prison.

The International Partnership Group for Azerbaijan welcomes the Committee's decision and calls upon the Azerbaijani authorities to implement the European Court's judgment in Fatullayev's case by immediately and unconditionally releasing him from prison.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

- The Council of Europe Committee of Minister's 11 March 2011 decision regarding the case of *Fatullayev v. Azerbaijan* (Application No. 40984/07) is available at [https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM/Del/Dec\(2011\)1108/1&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383](https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM/Del/Dec(2011)1108/1&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383).
- 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 ARTICLE 19 on +44 (0)207 324 2500 or rebecca@article19.org.