

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Azerbaijan: Amnesty International condemns beating of media watchdog Emin Hüseynov

Amnesty International condemns the alleged ill-treatment by police of Emin Hüseynov, director of the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS), in Baku on 14 June. Amnesty International calls upon the Azerbaijani authorities to ensure that investigation of this latest incident does not follow the pattern of procrastination, inaction and implausible explanation characterizing investigations of assaults on journalists.

Emin Hüseynov was one of a number of journalists and media representatives covering an event held at the Alaturka Café in Baku commemorating Argentinean revolutionary Che Guevara. Some 30 police officers raided the event at 1pm in the afternoon and detained about 20 participants. The detainees, including Emin Hüseynov and IRFS colleagues Rasim Aliyev and Mirrehim Hasanov, were taken to Police Department No.22 in the Nasimi District of Baku, allegedly due to the fact that those detained did not have identity documentation with them.

When Emin Hüseynov objected to being photographed and having his finger prints taken without explanation at the police station, he was reportedly taken into another room and severely beaten, including with the butt of a gun around the head. Those beating him reportedly also threatened to kill him, threats which were overheard by Emin Hüseynov's colleagues outside the room. When brought out of the room he allegedly lost consciousness, as witnessed by his colleagues. Requests from his colleagues to provide medical assistance were ignored until about 4:45pm, when he was released.

Emin Hüseynov was hospitalized with severe head and neck pains. Official investigators visiting Emin Hüseynov have reportedly attributed his condition to a "neurasthenic reaction" or "self-harm". On 17 June he was moved from the emergency ward of Baku's Centralized Emergency Medical Assistance Hospital to the neurological department for continued treatment.

Emin Hüseynov's Institute has widely publicized violations of the right of freedom of expression in Azerbaijan and advocated for the rights of journalists. He was previously assaulted and beaten by police in October 1993 and November 2006, when he was thrown to the ground and beaten by police during the forcible dispersion of a demonstration by journalists.

Furthermore, numerous serious assaults by unknown perpetrators against journalists following the unsolved murder of journalist and editor Elmar Hüseynov in 2005 have not been investigated or prosecuted. Amnesty International calls upon the Azerbaijani authorities to change this pattern and demonstrate their commitment to human rights standards by ensuring the prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation of the assault on Emin Hüseynov.

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