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No state
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Azadliq Newspaper Stops Publishing in Azerbaijan After Arrest of Financial Director

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ State

CATEGORY ⓘ ▶ Other acts having chilling effects on media freedom

NO STATE REPLY YET

PARTNER: Article 19, AEJ, CPJ, EFJ/IFJ, Index

Azadliq, the main opposition newspaper in Azerbaijan, has been forced to stop publishing following the arrest of their financial director, Faiq Amirov, and ongoing financial pressures from state-owned or affiliated companies.

Faiq Amirov was arrested on 20 August 2016 on charges of “inciting religious hatred” and “infringing the rights of citizens under the pretext of conducting religious rites”, after police allegedly found materials produced by Fethullah Gülen in his apartment and car. He is currently being held in pre-trial detention, accused of being an imam in the Gülenist movement. Rights groups believe the charges to be unfounded and politically-motivated; while Amirov has denied that the Gülenist materials are his, believing that the police planted them among his belongings. Amirov faces between two and five years in jail if convicted. According to his lawyer, Amirov has been denied medical treatment while in jail.

Azadliq has long faced financial pressures, which have been exacerbated by Amirov’s arrest, resulting in the paper’s inability to pay the state owned printer a 20,000 manat (approx. 10,000 EUR) debt. The printer subsequently refused to work with the paper, and it has not been published since September 2016. Azadliq was unable to pay this debt on two grounds: first, Azadliq’s bank have refused to recognize Azadliq’s new financial director, meaning that the newspaper cannot access its funds. Second, according to a newspaper spokesperson, Azadliq was owed and 70,000 manat (approx. 35,000 EUR) by the state-owned distribution company GASID.

Since being forced to stop publishing, the online version of Azadliq has reportedly faced repeated attempts to block access to the website. According to Qurium, the hosting provider of Azadliq’s website, there have been five incidences since November 2016 in which they recorded repeated attacks on the site, affecting the site’s ability to load, significantly restricting the ability of people

inside Azerbaijan to access the site. In the most severe incident, on 15 December 2016, the site was fully unreachable within Azerbaijan. The site is continuing to experience DDOS attacks.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



- ➔ **Statement from CPJ: "Azerbaijani authorities tighten screws on independent media"**
- ➔ **Report published on the Mapping Media Freedom platform: "Azerbaijan: Director of Azadliq newspaper arrested on multiple charges "**
- ➔ **RSF statement on mistreatment of Faiq Amirov in jail : "Newspaper's financial director denied medical treatment in prison"**
- ➔ **Quirium article : "How Azerbaijan is trying to block main opposition media news "**
- ➔ **Faiq Amirov's profile on Azerbaijan Free Expression**