

06  
Dec 2018

▲ Lvl. 1

Resolved

Azerbaijan

n° 87/2017

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## Criminal Case Opened against Turan Independent News Agency in Azerbaijan

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ State

CATEGORY  ▶ Detention and imprisonment of journalists

**PARTNER: Article 19, CPJ, EFJ/IFJ, Index, RSF**

On 7 August 2017, Azerbaijan's tax authorities opened a criminal investigation against Turan, an independent news agency. Turan is accused of under-declaring profits since 2014 and faces a fine of over 37,000 manat (18,000 euros) in back taxes and other charges. The agency denies the allegations and has referred the matter to a Baku economic administrative court. They believe the proceedings are part of a government-orchestrated campaign to limit the organisation's critical reporting. They have faced similar allegations in the past, and an audit conducted previously demonstrated that they were complying with their tax obligations.

Although Turan agreed to cooperate with the authorities and to provide them with the requested financial documentation, Turan's office was raided by tax officers on 16 August. The following day, the authorities announced that they had extended period covered by their investigation and requested the agency's financial records since 2010.

Turan is considered by many media freedom organisations as one of the last remaining independent media outlets in Azerbaijan.

### RESOLVED

**06 Dec 2018:** On 2 November 2017, the criminal case against Turan news agency was closed and charges against its director Mehman Aliyev dropped. On 6 December 2018, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be "resolved", concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.

UPDATES

**02 Nov 2017:** On 2 November 2017, the criminal case against Turan news agency was closed and charges against Mehman Aliyev dropped.

➔ Article published on Turan website : "Criminal Case against Turan News Agency Closed, Charges against Mehman Aliyev Dropped"

**11 Sep 2017:** On 11 September 2017 Mehman Aliyev was released from pre-trial detention and placed under house arrest.

➔ Article published by the Azerbaijan Press Agency (APA): "Mehman Aliyev released from prison"

**30 Aug 2017:** On 30 August 2017, the Baku Court of Appeal confirmed Mehman Aliyev's pre-trial detention.

**25 Aug 2017:** On 25 August 2017 Mehman Aliyev was sentenced to a three-month pre-trial detention. Turan news agency has announced that it will suspend its operations starting from September 1 as a result of Aliyev`s arrest and the agency`s bank accounts being frozen.

➔ Article published by RFE/RL: "Azerbaijan Orders Head Of Independent Turan News Agency Held In Pretrial Detention"

**24 Aug 2017:** On 24 August 2017, Mehman Aliyev, director of Turan news agency, was detained by the authorities as a suspect in a tax-evasion and abuse of power investigation.

➔ Article published by RFE/RL: "Azerbaijan's Turan News Agency Says Director Has Been Detained By Authorities"

➔ CPJ report: "Azerbaijan detains head of Turan news agency"

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

➔ CPJ report: "Azerbaijani news agency's office raided"

➔ JAMnews report: "Criminal case against 'Turan' independent news agency launched in Azerbaijan"

➔ Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS) report : "Statement on yet another Serious Criminal Proceeding against Independent Azerbaijani Media Outlet"

➔ MappingMediaFreedom report : Azerbaijan: Criminal investigation launched against Turan news agency

➔ Human Rights House Foundation Report: "Azerbaijan: Crushing all independent media"

➔ RSF statement: "Persecution of Azerbaijan's last independent media outlet"

## FOLLOW-UPS



13 Sep 2017 | PACE monitors react to release of Mehman Aliyev in Azerbaijan.

➔ Statement by PACE co-rapporteurs Stefan Schennach and Cezar Florin Preda



11 Sep 2017 | Statement by the Spokesperson of the Secretary General on the release of Mehman Aliyev

➔ Statement by the Spokesperson



11 Sep 2017 | OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media welcomes release of Azerbaijani journalist Mehman Aliyev, calls for all charges to be dropped.

➔ Statement by Harlem Désir



11 Sep 2017 | Volodymyr Arieiev, PACE General Rapporteur on Media Freedom and the Safety of Journalists, welcomes the release of the Director of Turan agency Mehman Aliyev.

➔ Statement by Volodymyr Arieiev



31 Aug 2017 | CoE Commissioner for Human Rights dismayed at last blow to media freedom in Azerbaijan: Turan news agency Director Mehman Aliyev detained and announced suspension of agency operations.

➔ Tweet by Nils Muiznieks



25 Aug 2017 | CoE Secretary General calls on the authorities in Azerbaijan to respect the spirit of the country's cooperation with the Council of Europe and to fully abide by its commitments under the European Convention on Human Rights in order to avoid yet another case of unjust deprivation of liberty which has no place in a democratic society.

➔ Statement by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe



25 Aug 2017 | PACE co-rapporteur on Azerbaijan (Sub-Committee on Conflicts between Council of Europe Member States) calls for the immediate release of Mehman Aliyev.

 Tweet by Stefan Schennach