

11  
Jun 2019

▲ Lvl. 1

Resolved

Azerbaijan

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## Mehman Huseynov Sentenced to Two Years on Defamation Charges

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ State

CATEGORY ⓘ ▶ Detention and imprisonment of journalists

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

On 9 January 2017, Mehman Huseynov, a blogger and journalist, was detained in Central Baku by plain clothed police officers and held incommunicado overnight. Mehman has reported that while in police custody, police placed a sack over his head and used force against him.

On 10 January, he was taken to Nasimi District Court, where he was tried on charges of disobeying the police (Article 535.1 of the Administrative Offences Code), which carries a sentence of up to 30 days in jail. The Court released him; however, he was fined 200 AZN (approx. 100 EUR).

Huseynov is well known for his investigative journalism, focused on corruption among the Azerbaijani elite. Most recently, he had posted pictures online of luxury properties, which he said were owned by government officials. He has long been subject to pressure by the authorities, and has been under a travel ban for several years.

### RESOLVED

**11 Jun 2019:** On 11 June 2019, given the Azerbaijan authorities had lifted the travel ban on Mehman Huseynov in April 2019 and his second case was filed, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be 'resolved', concluding that it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.

### UPDATES

**15 Apr 2019:** On 12 April 2019, the authorities of Azerbaijan lifted the travel ban of Mehman Huseynov, allowing him to leave the country and attend an OSCE conference on media freedom in Vienna.

➔ Article by JAMnews : "Azerbaijani blogger, former prisoner of conscience succeeds in leaving country in second attempt"

**10 Apr 2019:** On 9 April 2019, Mehman Huseynov was informed that he was banned from leaving the country, according to the order of the General Prosecutor's Office of Azerbaijan.

➔ Article by Turan News Agency : "Mehman Huseynov Not Released from Azerbaijan to International Events"

**04 Mar 2019:** Mehman Huseynov was released from prison on 2 March 2019 after fully serving a two-year prison sentence.

**22 Jan 2019:** On 22 January 2019, the Prosecutor General of Azerbaijan announced that the new criminal case against Mehman Huseynov, regarding his alleged attack on a warden, has been discontinued. This follows the statement of the President of Azerbaijan, who issued a recommendation to the prosecution "to ensure the fairness and objectivity of the investigation", taking into account the family situation and the youth of the defendant.

➔ Article by Turan agency: "Criminal Case against Mehman Huseynov Dismissed"

**02 Jan 2019:** On 26 December 2018, two months before his supposed end of sentence, new charges were brought against Mehman Huseynov. He was accused of beating a prison employee and placed in a punishment cell. In protest, he went on a dry hunger strike. On 30 December, Mr. Huseynov was transferred to Baku pre-trial centre. Due to his critical health state, a doctor was called in, who administered injections. The Institute for Reporters Freedom and Safety addressed an appeal to the international community to "condemn another flagrant repressive act and call for the immediate and unconditional release of Mehman Huseynov"

**28 Aug 2018:** On 14 August 2018, Mehman Huseynov asked for a conditional detention, a request that was rejected by the Garadargsky District Court on 24 August.

**28 Jun 2018:** On 25 June 2018, Azerbaijan's Supreme Court rejected the second appeal by Mehman Huseynov, upholding his prison sentence for defamation.

➔ Article published by OC media : 'Supreme court upholds prison sentence for Azerbaijani blogger'

**18 Dec 2017:** On 15 December 2017 the Baku Court of Appeals upheld the verdict against Huseynov, confirming his two year sentence for libel.

**29 Sep 2017:** On 29 September 2017 the Supreme Court of Baku partially granted Mehman Huseynov`s appeal, sending the case back to the Court of Appeals.

**12 Apr 2017:** On 12 April 2017, the Court of Appeals upheld the two years sentence against Mehman Huseynov.

➔ Article published on the website of contact.az news agency: "Court of Appeal Upholds Sentence on Mehman Huseynov"

**03 Mar 2017:** On 3 March 2017, Mehman Huseynov was sentenced to two years in prison on defamation charges (article 147.2 of the Criminal Code – defamation regarding a very serious crime) by the Surakhani district court. He was arrested in the courtroom. Nasimi district police chief filed the defamation charges against Huseynov, claiming the blogger lied when he stated following his release in January that he had been beaten by the police, demanding that he stopped his blogging activities. Mehman Huseynov is the first person to be convicted for slander in Azerbaijan.

➔ Report published on the Mapping Media Freedom platform: "Azerbaijan: Blogger sentenced to two years in prison for reporting that he was tortured "

➔ Statement by Article 19 and a coalition of 24 civil society organisations: "Azerbaijan: Crackdown on Free Expression Accelerates With Conviction of Prominent Blogger"

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

➔ Update to Mapping Media Freedom report: "Fresh charges brought against Mehman Huseynov"

➔ Statement from IPI : "Azerbaijani journalist given two-year prison term"

➔ IPI statement: "IPI urges Azerbaijan: drop slander case against journalist"

➔ EFJ's statement: "Azerbaijani journalist and blogger Mehman Huseynov detained overnight "

➔ Report published on the Mapping Media Freedom platform: "Azerbaijan: Leading blogger detained and tortured"

## FOLLOW-UPS



**07 Jan 2019** | PACE co-rapporteurs for the monitoring of Azerbaijan call upon authorities to review Mehman Huseynov's case

➔ Statement by Sir Roger Gale and Stefan Schennach

**07 Jan 2019** | Commissioner calls on the authorities of Azerbaijan to drop charges



against Mehman Huseynov

[➔ Statement by Dunja Mijatović](#)



**07 Mar 2017** | OSCE Freedom of Media Representative and Human Rights chief call for release of blogger and human rights activist in Azerbaijan

[➔ Statement from Dunja Mijatović](#)



**03 Mar 2017** | CoE Commissioner for Human Rights calls the two-year sentence against Mehman Huseynov in defamation case "appalling".

[➔ Tweet from Nils Muižnieks](#)



**11 Jan 2017** | CoE Human Rights Commissioner expresses his worries at reported ill-treatment, arrest, fine of blogger Mehman Huseynov.

[➔ Tweet from Nils Muiznieks](#)