



Doc. 14229
23 January 2017

Attacks against journalists and media freedom in Europe

Amendment¹ No. 24

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 8, insert the following paragraphs:

"Referring to paragraph 9 of its Resolution 2062 (2015) on the functioning of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan, the Assembly reiterates its concern with regard to retaliation against independent media and advocates of freedom of expression in Azerbaijan. In this regard, it deplores the arbitrary application of criminal legislation to limit freedom of expression, in particular the reported recent use of different criminal laws against journalists and bloggers, and recommends taking the measures necessary to ensure a genuinely independent and impartial review by the judiciary of cases involving journalists and others expressing critical opinions.

Recalling the decision adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6-8 December 2016 on Mahmudov and Agazade Group v. Azerbaijan, the Assembly regrets the absence of information on measures taken to ensure the adequacy of legislation on defamation and expresses, in this context, grave concern in the face of recent legislative amendments to the Criminal Code introducing new defamation offences subject to imprisonment, irrespective of whether incitement to violence or hatred is involved.

In particular the Assembly calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to:

- cease targeting the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS) and guarantee necessary conditions for the organisation to be able to operate freely in the country;
- stop harassment against independent blogger and IRFS Chairman Mehman Huseynov, return his identification documents and investigate allegations of ill-treatment against him;
- drop the criminal case against independent media outlet Meydan TV, refrain from pressuring its staff and contributors and lift all travel bans imposed on them;
- lift all investigations against Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and allow its office in Baku to carry out its normal activities."

Explanatory note

Journalists, bloggers and media workers are regularly targeted for reporting on cases of corruption and human rights abuses in Azerbaijan. The Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, its Chairs and employees have been under constant pressure by the authorities in recent years. The IRFS office was shut in August 2014.

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