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Silencing critical voices in Azerbaijan

Committee Opinion¹

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

Rapporteur: Mr Andries GRYFFROY, Belgium, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

A. Conclusions of the committee

The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media welcomes the analysis and proposals made by the rapporteur Mr Christophe Lacroix (Belgium, SOC), and in particular the urgent call on Azerbaijan to respect its international obligations under the Statute of the Council of Europe, the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and other international human rights treaties, and to cease the threats, intimidation and prosecution of journalists, ensure the immediate release of those who are in detention, and investigate properly all crimes committed against them.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Andries Gryffroy, rapporteur for opinion²

1. I welcome the report prepared by Mr Christophe Lacroix (Belgium, SOC) and support wholeheartedly his conclusions and proposals.
2. The draft resolution included in Mr Lacroix's report accurately describes the situation in Azerbaijan as "a blatant and systemic disregard for freedom of expression, as guaranteed by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights".
3. The whole media sector in Azerbaijan is captured by the State. According to Reporters Without Borders, no independent television or radio is transmitted from within the country, and all print newspapers with a critical stance have been shut down. Most independent news sites are based abroad and are targeted by state censorship.³
4. The Council of Europe's [Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists](#) registered 2 cases of impunity for murder of journalists, and 36 journalists currently in detention,⁴ including Ulvi Hasanli, editor-in-chief of Abzas Media and runner-up for the 2025 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize.⁵ Furthermore, it lists two systemic alerts: one on persisting concerns over the independence of İctimai Television (İTV), Azerbaijan's public broadcaster (with no reply so far from the State),⁶ and another one regarding the lack of adequate protection under defamation and insult laws and practice.⁷

1. Reference to committee: Doc. 15521, Reference 4659 of 24 June 2022. Reporting committee: Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. See [Doc. 16414](#). Opinion approved by the committee on 22 June 2026.

2. The explanatory memorandum is drawn up under the responsibility of the rapporteur.

3. See <https://rsf.org/en/country/azerbaijan>.

4. See <https://fom.coe.int/en/pays/detail/11709482>.

5. See <https://pace.coe.int/en/news/10019/le-prix-vaclav-havel-2025-decerne-au-journaliste-et-defenseur-des-droits-humains-ukrainien-maksym-butkevych>.

6. See [Azerbaijan, Persisting Concerns Over Independence of Public Broadcaster, No. 173/2025](#).

7. <https://fom.coe.int/en/alerte/detail/107641391;globalSearch=false>.



5. I join the draft resolution's expression of regret that Azerbaijan chose not to participate in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly by failing to submit its delegation's credentials for the years 2025 and 2026, instead of addressing the serious concerns expressed in [Resolution 2527 \(2024\)](#), and share the disbelief as to Azerbaijan's willingness to abide by its membership obligations.
6. As stressed by the draft resolution, the authorities of Azerbaijan should not use their decision not to submit the credentials of its parliamentary delegation to the Assembly as a pretext not to fully abide by their obligations and commitments as a member State and as a State Party to Council of Europe treaties.
7. Finally, I strongly support the draft resolution's proposal that the Secretary General of the Council of Europe make use of the powers conferred upon him under Article 52 of the European Convention on Human Rights, in order to obtain from the Azerbaijani authorities explanations as to how their internal law ensures the effective implementation of the Convention.
8. For these reasons, I invite the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media to support Mr Lacroix's report.