

URGENT ACTION

AZERI ACTIVIST: CHARGES MUST BE DROPPED

Pro-democracy activist Mehman Huseynov is facing up to five years in jail on charges of "hooliganism", despite eyewitnesses contradicting police claims that he committed acts of violence. He appears to have been targeted for highlighting abuses in the country during the Eurovision Song Contest.

Mehman Huseynov, a photojournalist and video blogger, worked as the Media Coordinator for the campaign group Sing for Democracy, which met with Swedish Eurovision competitor Loreen, the eventual winner, prompting her to speak out about Azerbaijan's human rights problems.

He has been charged with "hooliganism" and faces up to five years in prison if convicted. The charge relates to an incident during a protest he was covering on 21 May. Eyewitnesses told Amnesty International that police officers deliberately smashed his and a colleague's cameras, after which he swore at the officers.

Five of the officers have testified that Mehman Huseynov not only swore, but acted somehow "violently", without saying how. Two witnesses testified that he did nothing violent, and video footage appears to confirm this. Under Azerbaijani law, hooliganism is a criminal offence only when it involves violence.

His photographs of peaceful protests being violently dispersed in Baku have been disseminated widely by international media and on social networks. In March 2011 he was arrested and interrogated about his Facebook activity while working as a cameraman for Amnesty International.

He is the youngest brother of Emin Huseynov, director of Azerbaijani NGO Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, who led the "Sing for Democracy" campaign.

Please write immediately in English, Russian, Azeri, Turkish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to drop the charges against Mehman Huseynov immediately;
- Calling on them to end harassment and persecution of the activists for exercising their right to freedom of expression in the aftermath of the Eurovision Song Contest;
- Calling on them to order an independent investigation into allegations of police violence against journalists and peaceful demonstrators at the recent protests.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 JULY 2012 TO:

Baku City Prosecutor's Office

Aziz Seyidov
30 U. Hajibeyov Street,
Baku AZ1001, AZERBAIJAN
Fax: +994 12 498 11 56
E-mail: a.seyidov@prosecutor.gov.az

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Ombudsperson

Elmira Suleymanova
40 Uz. Hajibeyov Street
Baku AZ1000, AZERBAIJAN
Fax: +994 12 498 23 65
Email:
ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.az

Salutation: Dear Ombudsperson

And copies to:

President

Ilham Aliyev
Office of the President of the Azerbaijan
Republic
18 Istiqlaliyyat Street
Baku AZ1066, AZERBAIJAN
Fax: +994 12 492 0625
Email: office@pa.gov.az

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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Amnesty International has taken note of a fresh wave of human rights violations in Azerbaijan. A recent briefing, [Azerbaijan: Authorities determined to silence dissent to ensure successful Eurovision \(EUR 55/008/2012\)](#), documented numerous cases of journalists and human rights defenders being attacked, blackmailed and imprisoned. At present the organization counts 14 prisoners of conscience in Azerbaijan: 11 activists who have been in prison since last year, apparently for their role in last year's March-April protests and the two journalists and human rights defender sentenced to long prison terms this year.

Amnesty International is also concerned that local activists who have sought to use the Eurovision Song Contest to highlight human rights abuses started to be targeted since the withdrawal of international and media attention in the aftermath of the contest.

State-owned newspapers have already started a smear campaign against leaders of the Sing for Democracy campaign, labelling them agents of neighbouring Armenia, with whom Azerbaijan has had a territorial dispute for the last 20 years.

According to the opposition Popular Front Party, three other youth activists who took part in protests during the Eurovision Song Contest have been harassed by police in the past week. Local police in Gakh region summoned Khanim Mustafayeva and her father for questioning at a police station, warning her to cease her activities and notifying him that she had joined "radical forces". Ramin Musayev's parents were summoned to a police station twice to be told that he had joined radical religious forces and also disturbed the public order. Ramin Musayev was then interrogated and threatened with expulsion from his school.

The father of Bayim Hasanli, a prominent youth activist for the Popular Front Party, was also summoned to the local police station to be interrogated about his daughter's activities.

Name: Mehman Huseynov

Gender m/f: m

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