

# URGENT ACTION

## JAILED JOURNALISTS IN DIRE HEALTH

At least three of the 12 journalists from Meydan TV and affiliated media outlets, arbitrarily detained in Azerbaijan on spurious charges, are being denied urgently needed medical care. Their health is deteriorating fast. All 12 are behind bars in retaliation for their journalistic work, facing ill-treatment and denied their right to a fair trial. They must be immediately released, and all those requiring medical treatment urgently receive it.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

**Ilham Aliyev**  
**President of Azerbaijan**  
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Baku AZ1066, Azerbaijan  
office@pa.gov.az

Dear President,

*I am writing to you regarding the 12 journalists, from or associated with Meydan TV, who are currently on trial in Azerbaijan, arbitrarily detained since December 2024. The criminal proceedings against them are politically motivated and are part of the government's ongoing crackdown on independent media. I urge you to facilitate an immediate end to their arbitrary detention and prosecution, and I express my deep concern about deteriorating health of at least three of them who are denied the healthcare they require.*

*The denial of adequate healthcare, and the conditions under which these 12 journalists are detained, including overcrowded cells, sexual harassment and threats, and psychological threats, may amount to torture and other ill-treatment, and contravene Azerbaijan's human rights obligations.*

*Those at particular risk include Shamshad Agha (suffering from gastric ulcer), Aynur Elgunash (requiring physiotherapy after her surgery), and Ulviyya Guliyeva (needs weekly injections for a chronic condition). Besides, Ulviyya Guliyeva, who was detained in May 2025, has reported being threatened with rape twice and violently assaulted by three police officers in the same month. Her allegations have not been effectively investigated. Other co-defendants have reported numerous other violations by police and the penitentiary authorities, including sexual harassment (Aysel Umudova experienced it on the way to the police station following her arrest on 6 December 2024), psychological pressure (Khayala Aghayeva), and physical assault (Nurlan Gahramanli), amongst other.*

*The criminal charges brought against these 12 journalists are trumped up. They stand accused of violating Azerbaijan's financial regulations, yet these regulations are unduly restrictive and are manifestly intended to deprive independent media and NGOs of funding, by making legal compliance impossible for such outlets as Meydan TV. Under these regulations, any independent funding is illegal unless the government expressly allows it, which it never does for its critics. They also stand accused of unlawfully enriching themselves and other crimes which are manifestly untrue. Their only "crime" is being government critics and independent journalists.*

*I therefore write to ask you to take immediate steps to:*

***- end reprisals against free media and dissent in Azerbaijan, and unfounded prosecutions of journalists;  
- ensure the immediate release of the 12 Meydan TV journalists, and all persons arbitrarily detained;  
- effectively investigate allegations of torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, and in meantime ensure that the jailed journalists from Meydan TV whose health is at risk receive the healthcare they require without any delay.***

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since November 2023, the Azerbaijani authorities have arbitrarily detained nearly 30 journalists and other media workers, as they stepped up their crackdown on independent voices and all dissent in the country. At least 12 of those detained since 6 December 2024 are journalists and media workers linked to Meydan TV, the Baku School of Journalism and other independent media outlets, as part of a single criminal case.

On 6 December 2024, Meydan TV journalists Aynur Ganbarova (Elgunash), Aytaj Ahmadova (Tapdiq), Khayala Agayeva, Aysel Umudova, Ramin Jabrailzadeh (Deko) and Natig Javadli were detained, alongside Ulvi Tahirov, Deputy Director of the Baku School of Journalism. Further arrests followed, and Shamshad Agha (Aghayev), editor-in-chief of Argument.az and a contributor to Meydan TV, as well as freelance reporters Nurlan Gahramanli (Libre) and Fatima Movlamli, detained in February 2025, journalist Ulviyya Guliyeva (Ali) in May 2025, and photojournalist Ahmad Mukhtar in August 2025.

The criminal proceedings against Meydan TV and those associated with it are used to punish and silence critical journalism, as is the case with the other detained and imprisoned journalists in Azerbaijan.

These journalists have been charged under Article 206.3.2 of the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan (“smuggling of foreign currency”), a provision that has been repeatedly used to silence independent media outlets and journalists in Azerbaijan, including Abzas Media, Toplum TV and Kanal-13. Domestic sources of funding for independent media are extremely limited in Azerbaijan. The advertising market is limited, and businesses who dare to advertise in media critical of the government take risks. To preclude foreign sources of funding for critical media and NGOs, the authorities adopted legislation which requires government’s approval for foreign grants. This has effectively criminalized foreign funding and opened the way for prosecution of independent media and their staff if they received remuneration for their work outside of Azerbaijan, effectively wiping out independent outlets inside the country. Further, related charges are often added by the prosecution, as is the case in the “Meydan TV” case, including under Article 192.2.2 (“illegal entrepreneurship”).

On 20 June 2025, Baku Court of Grave Crimes sentenced seven media workers affiliated with the independent investigative outlet Abzas Media to prison terms ranging from seven-and-a-half to nine years. Those sentenced include director Ulvi Hasanli, editor-in-chief Sevinj Vagifgizi, investigative journalist Hafiz Babali, reporters Nargiz Absalamova and Elnara Gasimova, translator Mahammad Kekalov, and economist and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty correspondent Farid Mehralizada.

Criminal proceedings are ongoing against several other journalists, media workers including those of Toplum TV, including Toplum TV co-founder Alesger Memmedli, journalists Farid Ismayilov Mushfig Jabbar.

Detained journalists regularly report being subjected to ill-treatment, including denial of necessary medical care and being held in severely overcrowded cells (15–18 detainees confined to cells designed for eight to 10 people) and unsanitary conditions, including toilets located inside sleeping areas, causing or further contributing to the deterioration of their health.

Torture and other ill-treatment in detention are widespread in Azerbaijan and are carried out with impunity. Amnesty International has regularly reported the [denial of necessary healthcare for jailed government critics](#). Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) has [publicly denounced the "persistent lack of cooperation" from Azerbaijani authorities](#) regarding its calls to improve prison conditions and address torture and other ill-treatment.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Turkish, English, Azeri

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 31.05.2026

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**LINK TO THE PREVIOUS UA:** [Azerbaijan: Release journalists arrested after COP29 - Amnesty International](#)