

11 September 2017

Azerbaijan: Human rights journalist and ‘Turan’ Director Mehman Aliyev under house arrest

On 11 September 2017, Yasamal District Court in Baku City released human rights journalist **Mehman Aliyev** from custody and ordered him to be placed under house arrest. The human rights defender has been detained since 24 August 2017 and is facing charges of ‘*illegal entrepreneurship*’, ‘*tax evasion*’ and ‘*abuse of power*’.

[Mehman Aliyev](#) is an Azerbaijani human rights defender and prominent journalist who documents corruption and human rights violations in Azerbaijan. Mehman Aliyev is the Chief Editor and Director of ***Turan İnformasiya Agentliyi*** (*Turan Information Agency*), an independent news agency which was founded in 1990 by a group of journalists who refused to work in the state media. Turan Information Agency (also known as ‘*Turan*’) publishes analytical articles and news materials in Azerbaijani, Russian and in English.

On 11 September 2017, the Yasamal District Court in Baku City changed the measure of restraint in respect to Mehman Aliyev. According to the human rights defender’s lawyer the human rights defender was released from police custody and placed under house arrest. Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Taxes allege that the results of the inspection carried out against Turan Information Agency indicate that Mehman Aliyev has been evading paying taxes. On 6 September 2017, the Yasamal District Court in Baku City rejected the request for the release on bail of the human rights journalist. Mehman Aliyev and his legal council subsequently appealed the decision.

On 16 August 2017, tax officers conducted a raid of *Turan* premises, seized financial documents and froze the news agency’s bank accounts. On 24 August 2017, Mehman Aliyev was arrested and placed in pretrial detention in Detention Center N1 in Baku. On 25 August, the Department of Preliminary Investigation of Tax Crimes at the Ministry of Taxes of Azerbaijan initiated a criminal case against Mehman Aliyev under Articles 192.2.2 ‘*illegal entrepreneurship*’, 213.1 ‘*evasion taxes or contributions for compulsory social insurance in significant amount*’ and 308.1 ‘*abuse of official powers*’ of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Front Line Defenders condemns the continued detention of, and charges against, Mehman Aliyev as well as the freezing of Turan Information Agency’s bank accounts, which it considers to be in retaliation for their legitimate and peaceful human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Azerbaijan to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release, and drop all charges against, Mehman Aliyev, as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Unfreeze the bank accounts of Turan Information Agency as it is believed that the measure is solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights and freedom of information.

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Azerbaijan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.