

30 Days for Freedom

4 April - 3 May 2014

#FreethePress

WAN-IFRA www.worldpressfreedomday.org

His Excellency Ilham Aliyev
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11 April 2014

Your Excellency,

We are writing as part of the global online campaign '30 Days for Freedom' to call for the release of Hilal Mammadov and all journalists imprisoned in Azerbaijan.

Mr. Mammadov, a human rights defender and editor-in-chief of the *Tolishi-Sado* (Voice of Talysh) newspaper, was arrested in June 2012 and initially charged with drug possession. A month later he faced further accusations including spying for Iran, treason, and inciting ethnic hatred. On 27 September 2013, in a court appearance marred by numerous violations of international fair trial standards, Mr. Mammadov was sentenced to five years in prison.

Your Excellency, we strongly believe Mr. Mammadov is being punished for both his journalism and his activism in support of the rights of national minorities. Furthermore, we are concerned that his treatment follows a pattern of oppression against his Talysh-language newspaper *Tolishi-Sado*. Mr. Mammadov's predecessor as editor-in-chief, Novruzali Mammadov, was arrested in 2008 and died one year later after allegedly being tortured in prison.

Your Excellency, as Azerbaijan prepares to assume the chairmanship of the Council of Europe, we are appalled that journalists who report on government corruption and human rights abuses remain in prison. Mr. Mammadov is just the latest target of an increasingly severe crackdown on those exercising their right to peaceful freedom of expression. At least seven other journalists and bloggers are also currently behind bars. We respectfully remind you of your country's obligations to uphold international human rights standards, particularly in relation to Article 19 – guaranteeing freedom of expression – of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Azerbaijan is a signatory and that is further guaranteed by the country's constitution.

We therefore call on you to release Hilal Mammadov and all journalists imprisoned in Azerbaijan for their work.

Sincerely,

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The 30 Days for Freedom campaign

Organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum, the '30 Days for Freedom' campaign aims to highlight the plight of imprisoned journalists worldwide in the 30 days leading up to 3 May, World Press Freedom Day.

www.wan-ifra.org / www.worldpressfreedomday.org

