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## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **On the Government of Azerbaijan's Crackdown on Independent Voices**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry R. Kamian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
August 31, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Our shared commitments on freedom of expression, including for the media, date back to the founding of this Organization. They are the bedrock upon which our comprehensive security is built. As recently as 2010 in Astana, the participating States pledged “categorically and irrevocably ... that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the OSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned.”

It is with respect to these and other relevant OSCE commitments that the United States is deeply troubled by the August 24 arrest and three month pretrial detention of Mehman Aliyev, the prominent editor-in-chief of Azerbaijan's only remaining independent media outlet, Turan Information Agency. Other restrictive actions against Turan, including freezing its bank accounts and initiating tax evasion charges against it, are also troubling. These actions by the government of Azerbaijan to curtail freedom of the press and to further restrict freedom of expression are the latest in a negative trend that includes the government's May decision to block access to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and other independent media websites.

We urge the government of Azerbaijan to immediately release Mehman Aliyev, and all those incarcerated for exercising their fundamental freedoms, in accordance with its international obligations and OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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