



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

### **Concerns about the Constriction of Freedom of Expression in Azerbaijan**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
September 3, 2015

The United States is deeply troubled by Tuesday's decision by an Azerbaijani court to sentence prominent investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova to seven-and-a-half years in prison. We are further concerned by reports of irregularities during the investigation and trial, including the apparent exclusion of witness testimony and other key evidence.

This case is another example in a broad pattern of increasing restrictions on human rights in Azerbaijan, including curtailing the freedom of the press.

We call on the government of Azerbaijan to adhere to its OSCE commitments to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens.

I would like to bring to your attention that Ms. Ismayilova's case is also part of our "Free the 20" campaign - highlighting women political prisoners and prisoners of concern - that was launched on September 1 by the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Samantha Power. Freedom of the mass media is an integral part of democratic principles, and its violation is contrary to the interests of Azerbaijan. We urge the government of Azerbaijan to release Ms. Ismayilova and others who appear to be incarcerated solely for exercising their fundamental freedoms.

Finally, in closing, we reaffirm our strong support for the Representative on Freedom of the Media in exercising her mandate and encourage the government of Azerbaijan to make use of her many offers of advice and support.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.