

## **Reply of the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**24.09.12**

### **Session 1: Rule of Law I**

- Freedom of expression, free media and information,
- Address by the Office Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Thank you Madam Moderator,

I would like to exercise my right of reply concerning some groundless accusations regarding mass media addressed to my country.

Speaking about imprisoned journalists the interveners themselves stated that none of those journalists was imprisoned because of the professional affiliation, i.e. for hooliganism, possession of drugs and etc.

During his speech the representative of “Amnesty International” delivered only general statements about some journalists who are intimidated and who are beaten. But who were those journalists is mystery, I guess not only for my delegation and for the all the participants of the session as well.

Regarding the reference to Khadija Ismayilova, I would like to underline that the state authorities have condemned the spreading of video with her, as the right of inviolability of personal life is stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Currently, appropriate bodies are investigating the case.

Another remark was about the adoption of the Law on Defamation. I want to point out that Azerbaijan is on its way of adoption the law and recently the head of the Presidential Administration appealed to the Council of Europe Venice Commission and asked for assistance in preparation of the appropriate law. At the same time, we are closely cooperating with the OSCE Baku Office in this field. I want to add that for last 4 years not a journalist was imprisoned on the charges of defamation.

Regarding the murder cases of Elmar Huseynov and Rafiq Taghi, we can state that the investigation cases are currently underway.

In their speeches some foreign interveners stated as if for about 7 years the opposition in Azerbaijan is not able to hold meetings or demonstrations and as if the authorities are guilty in financial difficulties of the oppositional newspaper “Azadliq”. This information is groundless.

All measures are taken for holding meetings and demonstrations in Azerbaijan. However, holding such actions is sanctioned by the relevant law. The authorities of the capital city have defined numerous appropriate places for holding demonstrations, which do not violate the mode of transport, movement of the city inhabitants and etc.

And this year the opposition held rallies, approved with the mayor's office. Not a problem occurred during these meetings. Correspondingly, the officials repeatedly stated that they positively appreciate that the opposition approved the places for rallies with mayor's office. But the low number of participants doesn't satisfy the opposition and later they refused to hold sanctioned rallies and attempted to hold illegal demonstrations in parks, resting places of citizens and etc.

If to speak about the newspaper "Azadliq", I want to remind that from 1998 all print media in Azerbaijan are exempted from all state taxes. Besides, from 1998 till 2003 all debts of print media to state publishing house "Azerbaijan" were repaid by the state. At the same time, Conception of State Support for the Development of the Mass Media in the Republic of Azerbaijan was approved. Furthermore in 2009 the State Support Fund for Mass Media under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan was found and for the last 4 years about 10 million Euros was spend for the implementation of the purposes of the Conception and related projects on media through the Fund.

As you can see the problem of the above mentioned newspaper is related to unprofitability, rather than to the politics. Accusing the authorities, who have repaid the debts for many years, is at least biased.

Thank you!