



1156th Permanent Council of the OSCE, 31 August 2017

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Current Issues - Freedom of Expression in Azerbaijan

Statement by Switzerland

Mr Chairperson,

This statement is delivered on behalf of Norway and Switzerland.

We have been following closely the human rights situation in Azerbaijan and are deeply concerned about the repeatedly reported violations of freedom of expression and restrictions of freedom of the media. In that regard, we would like to express our concerns regarding the recent arrest of Mehman Aliyev, Director of Turan, the first independent news agency in Azerbaijan.

Detained on 24 August 2017 for an initial period of three months, Mr Aliyev is charged with tax evasion and the abuse of power. Civil society organizations, journalists and other voices unequivocally denied the substance of the allegations and have called upon President Ilham Aliyev to release Mehman Aliyev, accordingly.

States have the primary responsibility to ensure the respect and protection of human rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Sadly, international obligations and OSCE-commitments often lack full and successful implementation. We are committed to strengthen the relevant international instruments, enhance the dialogue in the respective fora, and assure technical cooperation and assistance on implementation where appropriate.

Mehman Aliyev's case sheds light on the pressure put on journalists in the region. We would like to reiterate the importance of the protection and safety of journalists worldwide. A journalist's right to carry out his or her work under safe conditions, without fear and risks of being harassed, threatened or attacked is a requirement of paramount importance for ensuring the freedom of the media and of expression to

which our States are committed. In this regard, we echo the call by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr Harlem Désir, on the authorities of Azerbaijan to fully comply with their international obligations and OSCE commitments with regards to freedom of expression and freedom of the media and thus to release Mr Aliyev with immediate effect.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.