

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/azerbaidjan-detained-journalists-at-risk-in-31-08-2012,43310.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Azerbaijan

Deprivation and ill-treatment

Detained journalists at risk in Azerbaijan's prisons

31 August 2012

Reporters Without Borders is deeply concerned about two Azeri journalists, [Avaz Zeynalli](#) and [Hilal Mammadov](#), who have been held arbitrarily in prison for several months.

"Journalists imprisoned in Azerbaijan suffer a double penalty," the press freedom organization said. "They are deprived of their freedom and also must endure ill-treatment, harassment and privations of all kinds. By its action, the Baku government is violating Azeri law and its international obligations

"We urge the prison administration to ensure without delay that Hilal Mammadov and Avaz Zeynalli, as well as all journalists in detention, are accorded the most basic rights. Avaz Zeynalli should be given the medical care he needs, outside the prison if necessary. Any other course of action would be a crime. We hold the authorities responsible for the fate of those in detention.

"We reiterate our call for the unconditional release of the two journalists, who should never have found themselves behind bars."

Zeynalli's health remains a cause for concern, although he has received treatment at the hospital in the Baku pre-trial detention centre where he is held. The prison administration's health department has told his family he is suffering from kidney stones, radiculitis and chronic rhinitis, and a number of other serious ailments. He also has a swollen and infected mole on his back, according to his colleague **Nizami Hasanov**, the editor of the newspaper *Khural*.

Zeynalli has written to the human rights ombudswoman, Elmira Suleymanova, to complain that family visits are only granted if he pays bribes of between 50 and 100 manats (50 and 100 euros). The prison administration has also refused requests to visit him from several international organizations including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

It regularly prevents him from talking to his lawyer in private. He has no access to newspaper and prison staff systematically read his letters. Reporters Without Borders supports the journalist's request for the ombudswoman to pay an unannounced visit to the prison.

Reporters Without Borders points out that Zeynalli, who was [arrested last October](#), is being held in custody pending his trial on fabricated charges.

Mammadov, [arrested in June](#) this year for drug possession then charged with high treason and incitement to national, racial, social or religious hatred, is also held in dreadful conditions. A case brought by the journalist against the prison administration alleging inhuman treatment was heard in camera two days ago in the basement of the Nasimi district court in Baku.

Discussion of the case lasted only half an hour but the court took three hours to reach a verdict. It was no surprise that the judges rejected the complaint by Mammadov, who said he had been given no food or water during his first two days in detention.

His predecessor as editor of the newspaper *Tolishi Sado*, **Novruzali Mammadov**, [died in prison](#) in 2009 after being denied medical care.

According to information received by Reporters Without Borders, there has been no improvement in the conditions in which **Zaur Guliyev**, editor-in-chief of *Khaya! TV*, has been held since [his arrest on 13 March](#). The organization learned in April that [he had been the victim of inhuman and degrading treatment](#) by prison guards and was subjected to psychological pressure tantamount to torture.
