

11 January 2017

### **Azerbaijan: Undocumented detention, beating and administrative conviction of human rights journalist, Mehman Huseynov**

On 9 January 2017, the human rights journalist, Mr. **Mehman Huseynov**, was detained by off-duty policemen and held incommunicado overnight. On 10 January 2017, he was falsely charged and found guilty of disobedience to a lawful order by police officers and sentenced to a 200 manat fine in a closed hearing by Nasimi district court of Baku.

[Mehman Huseynov](#) is an Azerbaijani human rights defender and journalist who documents the extensive corrupt practices and violations of human rights in Azerbaijan. Mehman Huseynov is the editor-in-chief of the SANCAQ, a socio-political magazine, which is active on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. He is also Chairman of **the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS)**, an Azerbaijani human rights organisation that campaigns for freedom of expression and freedom of information. His recent campaign, "Hunt for Corrupt Officials", exposes documented corruption in the high echelons of Azerbaijan's ruling establishment.

At approximately 8:00 PM on 9 January 2017, in the centre of Baku, five off-duty policemen in plain clothes forcibly dragged Mehman Huseynov to an unmarked vehicle where his mouth was sealed with tape, a bag was put over his head and he was beaten and tasered. Later he was brought to an unknown location where he was beaten further by eight unidentified people. After he lost consciousness, an ambulance was called and he received unknown injections.

In the evening of 9 January 2017, Mehman Huseynov's lawyer, Elchin Sadikov, contacted the police headquarters in Baku and was told that his client was not among the people they had detained. The next day he found out that Mehman Huseynov was brought to the 22nd Nasimi police station and held incommunicado for over 12 hours. Mehman Huseynov was falsely accused of disobedience to a lawful order by police officers. Police had allegedly received a complaint from someone who had allegedly hit shoulders with Mehman Huseynov resulting in a quarrel between both parties on the street. On 10 January 2017, Mehman Huseynov was tried in a closed hearing and found guilty, by Nasimi district court of Baku of committing an administrative offence under Article 535 part 1, of the Administrative Code of Azerbaijan (disobedience to a lawful order by police officers), which is a false charge. Mehman Huseynov was sentenced to a 200 manat fine (approximately 105 euro).

Mehman Huseynov and his lawyer intend to file a complaint against unlawful detention and ill-treatment while in detention.

This is not the first time Mehman Huseynov has been targeted due to his human rights work. Three weeks prior to this incident, a group of unidentified people attempted to kidnap the human rights defender. Mehman Huseynov successfully broke away and escaped from his assailants. This attempted kidnapping took place in public on the street.

Front Line Defenders is gravely concerned about the arbitrary detention, beating and judicial

harassment against Mehman Huseynov, which it considers to be in retaliation to his legitimate and peaceful human rights work.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Azerbaijan to:**

1. Immediately drop all charges against Mehman Huseynov as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the arbitrary detention and the allegation of ill-treatment against Mehman Huseynov, with a view to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Take all necessary measures to ensure the physical and psychological security of Mehman Huseynov;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Azerbaijan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.