



Document #2143167

HRW – Human Rights Watch

(Author)

Azerbaijan Jails Prominent TV Journalists, Media Workers

Court Sentences Nine in Toplum TV Case

Giorgi Gogia

An Azerbaijani court on July 27 sentenced nine journalists, media workers, and civil society activists to between 12 and 15 years in prison. It is the harshest verdict since the government began its ongoing crackdown on independent journalism.

The Baku Grave Crimes Court handed down the sentences in the so-called Toplum TV case. Akif Gurbanov and Ruslan Izzatli, affiliated with the Third Republic civic platform which co-produced Toplum TV's programming, received 15-year sentences. Toplum TV co-founder Alasgar Mammadli received a 14-year sentence, as did Ali Zeynalov, a researcher at the Democratic Initiatives Institute, an independent organization that supports public initiatives and promotes democratic principles, human rights, and transparent elections in Azerbaijan. Democratic Initiatives Institute staff members Ramil Babayev and Ilkin Amrahov and video editor Mushfig Jabbarov received 13 years each. Journalists Farid Ismayilov and Elmir Abbasov were sentenced to 12 years each.

The authorities initially accused the nine of currency smuggling, later adding other financial crimes. All denied the charges and said the prosecutions were politically motivated.

Toplum TV's editor, Shahnaz Beylergizi, remains under a travel ban while authorities investigate her on similar charges, in a separate case.

The sentences are the longest imposed during Azerbaijan's yearslong campaign against independent media and civil society. They exceed the terms of between seven-and-a-half and nine years [imposed](#) on AbzasMedia journalists in June 2025 and upheld by the Supreme Court in April 2026.

Toplum TV was among Azerbaijan's last independent news outlets before the authorities began arresting its staff and associates in 2024. The authorities have used similar currency smuggling allegations against journalists from AbzasMedia and Meydan TV. The trial of 12 Meydan TV journalists and media workers remains ongoing.

Azerbaijan's [restrictive regulatory framework](#) has largely excluded independent media and civil society groups from lawful avenues for operating and accessing funding, forcing many to work at the margins of the law and leaving them vulnerable to retaliatory prosecutions on spurious financial charges.

The Azerbaijani authorities should seek to have the convictions voided and those imprisoned released, and end the politically motivated prosecutions of journalists and media workers. Azerbaijan's international partners should publicly condemn the sentences, press the authorities to release those imprisoned, and make clear that continued repression of independent media will have consequences for political, economic, and security cooperation.

ecoi.net description:

Article on the politically motivated imprisonment of journalists, media workers and civil society activists

Country:

Azerbaijan

Source:

[HRW – Human Rights Watch](#) (Author)

Published:

29 July 2026

Original link:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/07/29/azerbaijan-jails-prominent-tv-journalists-media-workers>

Document type:
Appeal or News Release

Language:
English

Available on ecoi.net since:
3 August 2026

Document ID:
2143167

Austrian Red Cross	Wiedner Hauptstraße	Contact
Austrian Centre for	32, 1041 Wien	Imprint & Disclaimer
Country of Origin and	T +43 1 589 00 583	F.A.Q.
Asylum Research and	F +43 1 589 00 589	Data Protection Notice
Documentation	info@ecoi.net	
(ACCORD)		

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

