



For immediate release – 7 July 2010

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Azerbaijan: Eynulla Fatullayev Sentenced to 2.5 Years’  
Imprisonment on New Political Charge**

**ARTICLE 19 condemns the 6 July decision by a Baku district court to convict Editor-In-Chief Eynulla Fatullayev of drug possession and sentence him to 2.5 years in prison. This conviction follows the recent ruling of the European Court of Human Rights’ (ECtHR) in two previous cases against Fatullayev, in which the ECtHR ordered the Azerbaijani Government to immediately release Fatullayev from prison.**

ARTICLE 19 considers Fatullayev to be in prison for political reasons. We believe the charge of drug possession to have been based on fabricated evidence and intended to keep Fatullayev in prison despite the ECtHR’s ruling in his case.

According to Media Rights Institute Director Rashid Hajili, who is one of Fatullayev’s defence lawyers, Fatullayev’s defence team will appeal this case immediately and will pursue it up through the ECtHR if necessary, as they believe it constitutes a violation of Articles 3 and 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights. *“This conviction shows that the government will do anything necessary to keep Eynulla in prison,”* said Hajili.

*“This is clearly another case of the Azerbaijani Government using the law in a political manner to silence its critics,”* comments ARTICLE 19 Executive Director Agnès Callamard. *“Such behaviour seriously calls into question Azerbaijan’s commitment to human rights and freedom of expression,”* continued Callamard.

ARTICLE 19 calls on the Azerbaijani Government to drop the current charges against Fatullayev and comply with the ECtHR’s ruling, including by immediately releasing Fatullayev from prison.

ENDS

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.