



Catherine Ashton, Vice-President, European Commission, and High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, European Council
Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy
Martin Schulz, President, European Parliament
Ministers of Foreign Affairs, EU member states
Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary-General, Council of Europe
Anne Brasseur, President, Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe (PACE)
Didier Burkhalter, Chairperson-in-Office, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan
Malena MÅRD, Head of EU Delegation in Azerbaijan

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The Statement of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on the arrest of Hasan Huseynli, the head of Intelligent Citizen Enlightenment Center Public Union, Azerbaijan

On 14 July, Nizami Region Court of Ganja, sentenced Hasan Huseynli, head of “Intelligent Citizen” Enlightenment Center Public Union based in Ganja city in Azerbaijan for 5 years, 11 months and 28 days. The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum protests strongly against the arrest of Hasan Huseynli. He was arrested on trumped up charges of hooliganism for allegedly stabbing someone with whom he had never come in contact. The police in Ganja have confirmed the charges. The investigation that was carried out against Hasan Huseynli is completely unlawful and absurd, and does not warrant his detention.

Hasan Huseynli is an education promoter, social activist, and community leader, who has had a huge positive impact on hundreds of young Azerbaijanis, encouraging them to study abroad and contribute to Azerbaijan’s development with their knowledge and skills. He is a highly respected civil rights activist, and his organisation is highly regarded in Azerbaijan and abroad. We consider Hasan Huseynli’s detention to be part of a larger clampdown on civil society.

We urge the government of Azerbaijan to immediately free Hasan Huseynli, and to drop all charges against him. The authorities must understand that every additional political prisoner in Azerbaijan undermines the country’s image abroad and its position in the Council of Europe and in the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe as well as its relations with the European Union.

We urge the European Commission, the EU Delegation in Baku, and the European Parliament to condemn his arrest in the strongest terms, and to support the Civil Society Forum in putting pressure on Azerbaijan authorities for the immediate release of all political prisoners in Azerbaijan.