

7 January 2019

Statement by the Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership on the threat to the life and freedom of Mehman Huseynov, an imprisoned Azerbaijani blogger

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to release Mehman Huseynov, an imprisoned Azerbaijani blogger – currently on hunger strike in protest against renewed criminal proceedings, which threaten to prolong his incarceration for up to seven years.

Mehman Huseynov was initially imprisoned on 3 March 2017 for two years, after he criticised the country's officials for corruption. Huseynov went on a hunger strike when prison officials charged him with violently resisting their orders, an offence which carries a prison sentence of between three and seven years.

The Steering Committee supports the recent statement of the EaP CSF Azerbaijani National Platform, which calls on the European Union to make the release of Mehman Huseynov and other political prisoners in Azerbaijan a condition of the continued EU-Azerbaijan Human Rights Dialogue, due to take place early next month in Baku. The Dialogue is part of the negotiation between the EU and Azerbaijan on a Strategic Partnership Agreement.

Freedom for political prisoners and an end to repression against those Azerbaijani citizens who seek to exercise their civil rights is essential if the forthcoming Strategic Partnership Agreement is to be more than a hollow document, which will merely demonstrate that neither of the two parties are committed to the rule of law.

Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum