



FREEDOM NOW

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**Media Release**

**Azerbaijani Journalist Emin Huseynov Departs Azerbaijan, Ends 10 Month Legal Limbo**

Washington, D.C.: Freedom Now is pleased to announce that Azerbaijani journalist and human rights activist Emin Huseynov safely left Azerbaijan Saturday, after spending 10 months sheltered at the Swiss embassy in Baku. Mr. Huseynov departed Azerbaijan by plane with Switzerland's foreign minister Didier Burkhalter, who was attending the opening ceremonies of the European Olympic Games.

“We are relieved to know that Mr. Huseynov is safe and we thank Switzerland for the role it played in securing his passage out of the country. We hope that the international community will follow this example and take a more active role in persuading Azerbaijan to end the imprisonment of more than 100 prisoners of conscience, including civil society leaders Leyla and Arif Yunus and Intigam Aliyev, all of whom are suffering from serious health problems,” said Freedom Now's executive director Maran Turner.

Mr. Huseynov is chairman of the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, an organization dedicated to defending the rights of journalists and protecting freedom of expression and information in Azerbaijan. He was previously arrested in 2008, during which he was beaten so badly by police that he sustained head and brain trauma.

Mr. Huseynov sought refuge at the Swiss embassy in August 2014 as Azerbaijani authorities expanded their crackdown on civil society and sought to take him into custody on specious charges. In retaliation for Mr. Huseynov's actions, police conducted raids on the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety's offices and harassed staff members as well as Mr. Huseynov's family.

Mr. Huseynov was subsequently charged with tax evasion and illegal entrepreneurship and faced up to 12 years in prison. Similar charges have been used to imprison an increasing number of civil society activists and human rights defenders in Azerbaijan, including Rasul Jafarov and Intigam Aliyev. For more information about the crackdown on civil society in Azerbaijan, please see Freedom Now's joint report with the Human Rights House Foundation: *Breaking Point in Azerbaijan: Promotion and glamour abroad, Repression and imprisonment at home.*

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*Our mission is to free prisoners of conscience through focused legal, political and public relations advocacy efforts.*