
COUNSELOR FOR AZERBAIJANI EMBASSY IN US SLAMS WASHINGTON POST'S ANTI-AZERBAIJANI ATTACKS

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By Elmira Tariverdiyeva - Trend

Vugar Gurbanov, counselor for Azerbaijani Embassy in the US, published an article in the Washington Post, sharply criticizing anti-Azerbaijani attacks published there previously.

The Sept. 5 editorial The Azeri payoff was disappointing because it presented a distorted and a gloomy view of Azerbaijan, he said in the article.

The concern for a fellow journalist, Mehman Aliyev, was understandable, yet the wholesale dismissal of Azerbaijan's judicial and tax system does not help either the rule of law or civil society development, Gurbanov noted.

He said the Media Council, an umbrella group for various media organizations in Azerbaijan, openly raised its own concern with the editorial and criticized its excessive negativity.

This is the same Media Council that recently called on the authorities to release Mr. Aliyev from pretrial detention. The Azerbaijani society speaks in many vibrant and varied voices. This is often missing from the news coverage.

Moreover, despite the strong partnership with the US, Azerbaijan has often been a subject of persistent narrow-focused negative campaigns, according to Gurbanov.

Let us avoid the trap of predictable pessimistic stereotypes and follow a more balanced and productive approach, he added.

Earlier, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev instructed the appropriate authorities to consider the request by Director of Turan News Agency Mehman Aliyev to replace his imprisonment with house arrest.

Ali Hasanov, the presidents aide for public and political affairs, said this decision is a clear manifestation of Ilham Aliyevs unchangeable position and will to ensure freedom of speech and information, independence of the mass media and free activities of journalists.

Azerbaijans Ministry of Taxes has earlier said that based on the results of an inspection carried out in Turan Information Agency to identify tax risks and cases of tax evasion, it was established that Mehman Aliyev had been evading payment of taxes to the state budget.

A criminal case was initiated against Mehman Aliyev under articles 192.2.2 (illegal entrepreneurship), 213.1 (evasion of taxes or compulsory social insurance contributions) and 308.1 (abuse of power) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

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