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PRESS RELEASE

Azerbaijan: Seven Years On, Still No Justice for Elmar Huseynov

London 02.03.12: On the seventh anniversary of editor Elmar Huseynov's murder, the International Partnership Group for Azerbaijan (IPGA) remains deeply concerned regarding the continuing cycle of violence against journalists and impunity for their attackers in Azerbaijan. The IPGA calls for the authorities to bring Elmar Huseynov's murderers to justice and to seriously investigate and prosecute all cases of violence against journalists.

Today marks the seventh anniversary of the murder of *Monitor* editor-in-chief Elmar Huseynov, who was fatally gunned down in his apartment building in a well-organised attack in 2005. Since Elmar Huseynov's murder, there have been dozens of violent attacks against journalists in Azerbaijan, including the murder of prominent journalist and writer Rafiq Tagi in November 2011. None of these attacks have been seriously investigated or prosecuted, resulting in a climate of impunity for those who wish to use violence to silence critical voices.

"In failing to adequately investigate any attack against a journalist in the past seven years, the Azerbaijani authorities are violating their international human rights commitments. They must take immediate steps to ensure protection of freedom of expression in the country", said ARTICLE 19 Executive Director Agnès Callamard.

"Seven years on, the killers of our colleague Elmar Huseynov walk free while independent journalists in Azerbaijan continue to face harassment, obstruction, violent retaliation, politically motivated prosecution, imprisonment, and murder for their work. As the host to this year's Eurovision Song Contest, Azerbaijan must demonstrate its commitment to justice by prosecuting those responsible for Huseynov's assassination as well as other crimes against the press", said CPJ Europe and Central Asia Program Coordinator Nina Ognianova.

"The continuing impunity for Elmar Huseynov's killers and the lack of results in the investigation into Rafiq Tagi's murder cast a dark shadow over all Azerbaijani journalists, infusing a sense of insecurity and despair. Threats and physical attacks have become commonplace for them. Azerbaijan has never been ranked so low in the Reporters Without Borders press freedom index. The authorities could put an end to

this situation if they wanted. It is high time they acted”, said Reporters Without Borders Director Olivier Basille.

The IPGA condemns the use of violence to restrict freedom of expression and calls for the authorities to end this vicious cycle by immediately and impartially investigating all attacks against journalists and bringing those responsible to justice.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information on the cycle of violence against journalists and impunity for their attackers in Azerbaijan, see the joint report *Free Expression Under Attack: Azerbaijan's Deteriorating Media Environment* available at <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/publications/free-expression-under-attack.pdf>.
- The International Partnership Group for Azerbaijan is a coalition of 20 international NGOs working to promote and protect freedom of expression in Azerbaijan. For more information about the Partnership, please contact Rebecca Vincent at ARTICLE 19 on +44 (0)207 324 2500 or rebecca@article19.org.