

Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety



FALSE FREEDOM

Internet freedom in Azerbaijan
after the 7th Internet Governance Forum

THE EXPRESSION ONLINE INITIATIVE
OCTOBER, 2013

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Acronyms

APC	– Association for Progressive Communications
BTRIB	– Production Association for Baku Telephone Communication
ECHR	– European Convention on Human Rights
GNI	– Global Network Initiative
ICT	– Information and communications technology
ICCPR	– International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IGF	– Internet Governance Forum
IRFS	– Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety
IMEI	– International Mobile Equipment Identity
IMS	– International Media Support
ISP	– Internet service provider
IREX	– International Research & Exchanges Board
ITU	– International Telecommunications Union
NSN	– Nokia Siemens Networks
NGO	– Non-Governmental Organization
NTRC	– National Television and Radio Council
MICT	– Ministry of Information and Communications Technology
LTE	– Long-term evolution
RFE/RL	– Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
RFID	– Radio Frequency Identification
UN	– United Nations
USAID	– U.S. Agency for International Development
WIMAX	– Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access

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The report also draws on the previous Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety and Expression Online Coalition research in the field of freedom of expression online.

In preparing the report, IRFS also consulted and analyzed other documents, including the reports of local and international nongovernmental organizations, namely those by Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Freedom House, Expression Online; the report by UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Frank La Rue; UN documents; IGF website; as well as press releases and media reports.

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The Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS) and International Media Support (IMS) are both a member of the Global Network Initiative (GNI), the multi-stakeholder initiative designed to address efforts by governments to pressure information and telecommunications companies to comply with policies that violate users' freedom of expression and privacy.

The GNI brings together companies from the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector, human rights organizations, academics and investors to address laws and policies of governments that seek to enlist companies in acts of censorship and surveillance and to promote the rule of law and the adoption of laws, policies and practices that protect and respect freedom of expression and privacy.



Summary

For Azerbaijan's ruling establishment, the hosting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Baku in November 2012 was yet another propaganda coup in a year marked by the Eurovision Song Contest and the launch of Azerbaijan's bid for Baku to host the 2020 Olympic Games.

Azerbaijan's government has sought to make the internet a new source of economic strength and build the country into the information-technology hub of South Caucasus. With that goal in mind, the government has made some efforts to expand the telecommunications sector, promote internet usage, and improve the internet portals of state entities. At the same time, the authorities apparently fear the internet's democratizing potential and have attempted to exercise greater control over the Internet, though it remains much less restricted than print and broadcast media, which are the main sources of news for most citizens.

Despite hopes that the IGF 2012 would promote multi-stakeholder dialogue for the Internet freedom in Azerbaijan, the situation changed from bad to worse—in fact, in the post-IGF syndrome, the authorities of Azerbaijan has waged crackdown on Internet freedom.

The number of worrisome developments have occurred in the aftermath of the IGF 2012, and in particular, during the first half of 2013 in the run up to October's presidential election.

The adoption of legislation extending criminal defamation provisions to online content was the single biggest blow to freedom of expression online in the post-IGF Azerbaijan.

Targeting by authorities of individuals who used to the Internet to voice critical opinions remained a significant threat. At the end of September, seven journalists remained in detention or prison in connection with expressing critical opinions online¹.

A number of civic and political activists who used the Internet to express criticism and call for protest have been languishing behind bars, in connection with exercising their right to free expression.

Activists who use Facebook to organize protests are now facing steep fines² under recent changes to the freedom of assembly law.

Following IGF in Baku, there were also reports of attacks on the websites of independent and opposition news sources.

In light of the growing influence of social media in the country, ruling party MPs have stepped up rhetoric suggesting that social networking sites – and Facebook in particular – should be regulated or blocked in Azerbaijan.

While online media are largely free from government censorship, the authorities have expressed a desire to regulate it. For example, in a statement issued on 10 January, media regulator, National TV and Radio Council's Head Nushirevan Maharramov said that online stations should be subject to licensing, just like traditional television stations. On 14 February, a commission was set up under the Press Council, tasked with handling

¹ See IRFS's annual freedom of expression report "Azerbaijan's Critical Voices Struggling for Survival" Chapter Five, <http://bit.ly/13ZyjKA>. Follow the IRFS website (www.irfs.org) for the cases of journalists arrested in connection with online expression

² <http://expressiononline.net/monitoringresearch/monthly-internet-freedom-report-january-20-2013-february-20-2013>

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Opening plenary session of the 7th Internet Governance Forum. Azerbaijan's Minister of Communications and Information, Ali Abbasov (fourth from the left) and Deputy Prime Minister Abid Sharifov (fifth from the left) delivered opening addresses on behalf of the host country. November 2012, Baku. Photo: IRFS

citizens' complaint about ethical violations online, hacker attacks against websites, and other issues related to online media.

The Expression Online Initiative is also seriously concerned about plans for a new bill that would grant the government broad powers to restrict online content, ostensibly to protect children from pornography and other harmful material. In authoritarian regimes, the introduction of such legislation is often followed by technical censorship of the Internet. For example, government bodies might prepare a blacklist of prohibited sites, resulting in blocked access to these sites.

This negative trend does not reflect the public rhetoric espoused by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev³. For the past few years, President Aliyev has been steadily declaring information and communication technologies (ICTs) a developmental priority.

As stated on the official website of President of Azerbaijan, the freedom on the Internet is policy priority for President Aliyev⁴.

In order for Azerbaijan to move in a more positive direction on Internet freedom, the Azerbaijani people and the international community must place pressure on the Aliyev's administration to ensure that rhetoric becomes reality.

³ 'Azerbaijan has a place in the world of modern technology which is clearly illustrated by the active development of internet journalism', President Ilham Aliyev, July 2013. <http://www.news.az/articles/official/81298>

⁴ The official website of the President of Azerbaijan Republic. Internet freedom has been secured, the online media has developed. <http://www.president-az.com/article/en/1302/22>

7TH MEETING OF THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

INTERNET GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN, ECONOMIC & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

6-9 NOVEMBER 2012, BAKU, AZERBAIJAN



Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs speaks the IGF opening ceremony. November 2012, Baku. Photo: IRFS

Introduction

On July 5th, 2012 the United Nations Human Rights Council approved a groundbreaking resolution⁵ stating that the right to freedom of expression on the internet should be protected by states. The resolution affirmed the simple idea that “The same rights that people have offline must also be protected online”. The resolution had the support of 85 co-sponsors⁶, including Canada, Denmark, the United States, Azerbaijan, and Turkey, an incredibly large number compared to previous resolutions on the same issue. It recognizes “the global and open nature of the internet as a driving force in accelerating progress toward development”. The resolution calls upon all UN member states to “promote and facilitate access to the Internet and international cooperation aimed at the development of media and information and communications facilities in all countries”.

On November 6-9, 2012, Azerbaijan hosted the 7th annual Internet Governance Forum (IGF), an annual UN conference which serves to bring people together from various stakeholder groups as equals, in discussions on public policy issues relating to the Internet.

⁵ Resolution L13 – The Promotion, Protection and Enjoyment of Human Rights on the Internet – adopted by consensus on by the Human Rights Council on Thursday, July 6, 2012. <http://geneva.usmission.gov/2012/07/05/internet-resolution/>

⁶ Ibid

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IRFS chairman, Emin Huseynov (first from the left), the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, Gulnara Akhundova of the International Media Support and Ambassador Koray Targay, Head of the OSCE Office in Baku attend the Expression Online-organized pre event at the 7th IGF meeting. November 2012, Baku. Photo: IRFS

Internet governance is the development and application by Governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programs that shape the evolution and use of the Internet⁷.

The IGF may “identify emerging issues, bring them to the attention of the relevant bodies and the general public, and, where appropriate, make recommendations,” but does not have any direct decision-making authority⁸. In this mandate, different stakeholders are encouraged to strengthen engagement, particularly those from developing countries⁹.

Despite hopes that the IGF would promote multi-stakeholder dialogue for the Internet freedom in Azerbaijan, the situation changed from bad to worse—in fact, in the post-IGF syndrome, the authorities of Azerbaijan has waged crackdown on Internet freedom.

In Azerbaijan, where the traditional media is strictly controlled, the Internet has opened a window for greater freedom of expression, debate and communication. Despite some technological advances, users in Azerbaijan continue to experience censorship, infringements on their freedom of speech, surveillance, Internet disconnections, and other limitations.

This report examines Internet trends and policies in Azerbaijan as they affect freedom of expression, focusing particularly on the post-IGF developments.

⁷ Report of the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG), June 2005, p.4. <http://www.wgig.org/docs/WGIGREPORT.pdf>

⁸ “The Mandate of the IGF”, Paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda, Internet Governance Forum, retrieved 10 June 2013 <http://www.intgovforum.org/mandate.htm>

⁹ Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, paras 29-82, World Summit on the Information Society, United Nations, 18 November 2005 <http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1.html>

Recommendations

There is an undeniable need for mounting international pressure on President Aliyev to stand by his words and implement reform domestically. Azerbaijan must remain in dialogue with other UN member states that support initiatives to make the Internet accessible and unrestricted for everyone.

The Expression Online Initiative calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to immediately take steps to improve Internet freedom in the country. First and foremost, this will involve creating an environment conducive to freedom of expression and human rights more broadly. Journalists, bloggers, activists and ordinary citizens must be able to freely express themselves and participate in public life without fear of harassment, intimidation, threats, attacks or imprisonment, both on- and offline, in accordance with Azerbaijan's international obligations.

Specifically, the Expression Online Initiative calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to undertake the following steps:

Fulfill its international commitments to freedom of expression and take immediate, concrete steps to create an environment conducive to freedom of expression in Azerbaijan:

- End all forms of impunity for violence against journalists and ensure that all cases are adequately investigated and those responsible are brought to justice.
- Reverse regressive amendments to freedom of information legislation aimed at limiting the activities of journalists and media outlets.
- Remove defamation provisions from the Criminal Code.
- Immediately and unconditionally release the currently detained and imprisoned journalists, bloggers, and human rights defenders behind bars in connection with exercising their right to freedom of expression: Sardar Alibeyli; Nijat Aliyev; Ilham Amiraslanov; Araz Guliyev; Parviz Hashimli; Fuad Huseynov; Hilal Mamedov; Bakhtiyar Mammadov; Faramaz Novruzoglu; Rashad Ramazanov; Ilkin Rustamzadeh; Tofiq Yagublu; and Avaz Zeynalli.
- Immediately and unconditionally release others in detention or prison in connection with exercising their right to freedom of expression, including the young activists affiliated with the Azad Genclik (Free Youth) Organization, the NIDA civic movement, and the Popular Front Party youth movement.

Persecution of cyber dissidents:

- Immediately and unconditionally release all persons in detention or in prison in connection with exercising their right to freedom of expression online, including Araz Guliyev, Nijat Aliyev, Faramaz Novruzoglu, Ilkin Rustemzadeh, Rashad Ramazanov, Hilal Mammadov and Parviz Hashimli;
- Immediately drop the politically motivated charges against journalist Mehman Huseynov;
- Cease practices of targeting social media users who express opinions critical of the authorities or use the Internet to call for or organize protests;
- Redouble efforts to investigate the violation of Khadija Ismayilova's privacy and the blackmail attempts against her, and bring those responsible to justice;

National legal framework:

- Reinforce Azerbaijan's international obligations by aligning its Internet policy with the requirements of international law and principles, ensuring that the Internet remains an open and public forum for freedom of expression;

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Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev attended the Bakutel exhibition but did not participate in the opening ceremony for IGF (taking place next door) although his country was hosting the event. Photo: www.president.az

- Ensure that any interferences with Internet users' enjoyment of their rights have a legitimate aim and are proportional to that aim, in accordance with international standards;
- Refrain from applying "Internet kill switch" provisions as they are incompatible with the fundamental right to communicate;
- Introduce specific regulations to ensure network neutrality and guarantee universal access to a minimum standard quality of Internet throughout the country, ensuring no unjustified restrictions are imposed on Internet users;
- Establish an independent body to regulate all telecommunications issues;
- Take effective measures to ensure the privatization of the telecommunications industry in order to establish a competitive market and prevent governmental law enforcement bodies from unlawfully interfering in the activities of ISPs and Internet users;
- Repeal the recently introduced legislative changes criminalizing online defamation, and initiate a legislative reform for decriminalization of defamation

Online surveillance and content-filtering:

- Ensure that any restrictions of online content comply with the three-part test in accordance with international standards;
- Avoid deployment of state-level upstream blocking or filtering systems;
- Conduct comprehensive content accessibility tests in Azerbaijan's regions, including Nakhchivan and the occupied territories, and publish the findings;

Internet access and infrastructure:

- Invest in Internet infrastructure and work towards universal, affordable, high-speed Internet access nationwide;



The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatovic; the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muižnieks; European Commission Vice-President, Neelie Kroes and the European Union Ambassador Roland Kobia expressing their concerns over deteriorating situation with media and Internet freedoms in Azerbaijan. Press conference during the 7th IGF meeting. Baku, November 2012. Photo: IRFS

- Take steps towards abandoning dial-up and DSL Internet services and switch to fiber optic Internet communications;
- Develop frequency distribution policies in favor of mobile operators and other operators of 4G Internet;
- Create healthy and favorable conditions for investment in ICT development, providing equal conditions for both local and foreign investors;
- Cease practices which encourage monopolies in the ICT sector and create healthy conditions for new players to enter the market;
- Consider other policies to encourage universal Internet use, such as guaranteeing low-cost high-speed Internet access for every Azerbaijani family, and providing colleges and universities with free WI-FI;

Implementation of Azerbaijan's e-government strategy:

- Create a user-friendly e-government portal: instead of using a complicated system involving several ID numbers and passwords issued by different government agencies, allow individuals to register online with a single ID number and password;
- Provide for the secure transfer of information: ensure that third parties and the general public do not have access to information which should be kept private;
- Increase the number of interactions between citizens and government agencies: provide more interactive services on the websites of government agencies, including searchable databases, options to order copies of government publications, and options to check or update personal forms; and
- Educate and motivate: invest in creating advertisements to educate the public on the benefits of using e-services, and create incentives to increase the number of e-government users.

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Chapter One:

Azerbaijan's Telecommunications Infrastructure

“If a repressive government owns and operates the telecommunications infrastructure, blocks trade in computer and telecom equipment, does not allow a free market for access, devices or services to develop ... it's [then] easy to contain and control the internet.”

Milton M. Mueller¹⁰

The Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (MICT) continues its efforts to promote the introduction of more advanced ICTs and the improvement of e-government services. The national telecommunications operators are fiercely competing for new subscribers to their internet services, in some cases modestly improving their access speeds and providing some additional services.

Over the past decade, Azerbaijan's telecommunications and information technology infrastructure has been upgraded and expanded. Internet penetration has increased by 10% since September 2012, now reaching half of Azerbaijan's population.^{11 12}

With nearly nine million users, mobile-phone penetration reached approximately 110¹³ percent by September 2013, and has continued to grow since. The number of users accessing the internet via mobile devices is also increasing, with the mobile internet penetration rate has reached 31 percent by September 2013.

The fact that 62% of all internet users in Azerbaijan are mobile internet users¹⁴ clearly demonstrates that the broadband network is that well-developed in Azerbaijan as suggested by official rhetoric. In a positive move, the MICT, supported by the State Oil Fund, has embarked on a three-year project designed to expand broadband access to all villages and settlements by 2015.¹⁵

¹⁰ Internet revolution in crisis- Index on Censorship <http://www.indexoncensorship.org/2012/12/internet-global-itu-wcit/>

¹¹ ITU. 2012. “Percentage of Individuals using the internet. <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/>

¹² ITU. ICT Data and Statistics. June 2012. “Percentage of Individuals Using the Internet.” <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/> Although the State Statistical Committee reports as high as 65 percent penetration according to the WEF Report, government figures tend to be exaggerated. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/Global_IT_Report_2012.pdf

¹³ <http://www.ictnews.az/read-8620-news-2.html>

¹⁴ As found out by Expression Online's researchers.

¹⁵ <http://news.az/articles/tech/64547> The initiative towards expanding broadband by 2015 has no official name yet. The Initiative to increase Internet penetration and telecommunications infrastructure is part of the “State Program on development of communications and IT in 2010-2012 (e-Azerbaijan)”

The results of the Net Index by Ookla, a statistics of the Internet speeds worldwide, show that Azerbaijan has not made significant improvement in the speeds at which residents connect to the Internet. At the time of the 7th IGF in October 2012, the median download speed for the nation was 3.7 megabits per second (mbps) and the average upload speed was 1.3 mbps¹⁶.

By October 2013, the download speed has increased to 4.7 mbps and unload speed has come to 2.02 MB/s. This was only on a megabit per second increase (from 3.7 mbps to 4.7 mbps) since last year. Still, it is 3.2 times less than the average global indicator. Azerbaijan fell to 117th place in the Netindex statistics in terms of internet speed. (the country was 116th in 2012)¹⁷.

These statistics clearly demonstrate that, contrary to the official rhetoric, there has not been any achievements in terms of Internet development, except for the launch of the first Azerbaijan's telecommunication satellite.

Although international high capacity fiber optic cables go through territory of Azerbaijan, the local cable network still have slow capacity.

ICT access and infrastructure is heavily concentrated in urban centers, which hosts 80 percent of all fixed line networks.¹⁸ Since 2011, the total capacity of the international internet channels increased 2.2 times and is currently about 200 GB/s.¹⁹ Although these international high capacity fiber optic cables are going through territory of Azerbaijan, the local cable network still have slow capacity.

Internet Service Providers (ISP)

While liberalization of the telecommunications market is considered crucial to overall ICT development, this process has been gradual and hindered by a persistent, although opaque, government presence. The largest top tier Internet service provider (ISP) Delta Telecom, is privately owned, but allegedly controlled by the state.²⁰ Delta Telecom (previously operating as AzerSat) is the main supplier of international connectivity to 80 percent of all second-level ISPs.²¹ According to one source, it provides 25 ISPs with international connectivity, and maintains connections with 31 telecom operators and international providers.²² Delta Telecom owns and operates the largest fiber optic backbone in the country. It is also the largest provider of internet satellite services and the official distributor of the international satellite operator EUTELSAT, managing the rental, use, and lease of satellite channels to the Caucasus region.²³ Moreover, Delta Telecom was the first operator to introduce WIMAX technologies in Azerbaijan to support the use of wireless, broadband and unlimited internet access.²⁴

After many years of the Delta Telecom Ltd monopoly, in 2011, a relatively new company, Azertelecom Ltd, began to provide services in the backbone Internet connections market. Azertelecom shareholders include

¹⁶ For Household download index, see <http://www.netindex.com/download/allcountries/> . For Household upload index, see <http://www.netindex.com/upload/>

¹⁷ According to Netindex statistic for October 15, 2013 Azerbaijan stands on 117th place among 182 countries, <http://www.netindex.com/download/allcountries/>

¹⁸ <http://www.budde.com.au/Research/Azerbaijan-Telecoms-Mobile-Broadband-and-Forecasts.html>

¹⁹ <http://1news.az/economy/tech/20120717021811152.html>

²⁰ According to Freedom on the Net. 2012. Azerbaijan, experts believe that Deltatelecom is owned by the president's security chief. The company's ownership structure is not transparent.

²¹ http://abc.az/eng/news_05_01_2012_61142.html

²² http://abc.az/eng/news_05_01_2012_61142.html

²³ Delta Telecom is the distributor of satellite operator. Space industry and National Satellite is fully MICTs area.

²⁴ http://www.delta-telecom.net/Biz_kimik-en.html

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the private mobile telecom operator Azerfon, which has been linked to Azerbaijan's President daughters,²⁵ (95 percent) and two state-owned companies, Aztelecom (2.5 percent) and Production Association for Baku Telephone Communication (BTRIB) (2.5 percent).²⁶

Azertelecom completed construction on its fiber optic cable network in 2011, and has begun rolling out broadband internet service to the consumer and business market in Baku.²⁷ AzerTelecom established external connections with three international operators - Silknet, MegaFon, and Türk Telekomunikasyon Anonim Şirketi. In addition, Azertelecom offers Ethernet ports to help ISPs develop their own networks in the capital and extend services to the regions. It facilitates broadband expansion without requiring huge capital investments in infrastructure.

Telecommunications industry

Azerbaijan's telecommunications sector is largely in state hands with at least two telecommunications providers controlled by ruling regime.

Although Azerbaijan achieved certain progress in terms of liberalization of the telecommunications sector in 2012, a number of bureaucratic obstacles impede further development of fourth-generation long-term evolution (4G LTE) network.

In the language of telecommunication, a 4G mobile network implies the fourth generation standard in mobile phone communication. This is the successor of 3G, or the third generation standard²⁸.

The highly advanced 4G mobile network offers mobile ultra-broadband Internet access, which gives the user amazing speed and efficiency while working online with his/her mobile devices, such as smartphones, laptops and tablets. Using its high speeds, developers can make good use of 4G network to develop advanced IP telephony, mobile web apps, gaming apps, HD mobile TV, video conferencing and so on.

Azercell currently provides 4G LTE services but with limited geographic coverage. However, 99% of the mobile Internet traffic is still provided by 3G services. Although Azercell does have appropriate frequencies for provision of 4G, the transmission of voice calls remains impossible because of the lack of the relevant license.



*Azercell advertising the forthcoming introduction of 4G technology during an event in 2012. This technology was introduced, but has serious geographical limitations and is still not widely used.
Photo: Natalya Yeskova*

²⁵ http://www.rferl.org/content/azerbaijan_president_aliyev_daughters_tied_to_telecoms_firm/24248340.html

²⁶ <http://www.azertelecom.az/en/whoweare/>

²⁷ http://www.azertelecom.az/en/key_dates/

²⁸ What is a 4G Mobile Network? <http://mobiledevices.about.com/od/glossary/g/What-Is-A-4g-Mobile-Network.htm>

In 2007, public shares in the two largest mobile operators Azercell and Bakcell were privatized and a new player entered the fold, Azerfon. Restrictive government licensing has slowed mobile broadband uptake. In 2009, Azerfon partnered with UK based company Vodafone and secured an exclusive 3G operating license.²⁹ Positioned as the sole provider of mobile wireless access on 3G frequencies, Azerfon had a major competitive advantage. Azercell and Bakcell finally obtained 3G licenses in December 2011.³⁰

The MICT sustained heavy criticism for deliberately fostering a non-competitive environment, which was made worse by allegations that the President's daughters had business links to Vodafone's shareholders.³¹

According to a groundbreaking investigation by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) correspondent Khadija Ismayilova³², Azerfon, which also uses the Nar Mobile brand, is largely owned by the members of Azerbaijani president's family.

When the Azerbaijani ICT ministry announced the formation of Azerfon in late 2006, it said the company was owned by Siemens and several British firms. However, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) has asked Siemens about its share in the company and Siemens spokeswoman Monika Bruecklmeier-Langendorf said the company has never owned shares in Azerfon or any other mobile operator in Azerbaijan. Similarly, Nokia Siemens Networks (NSN) spokeswoman Anna Lehtiranta also denied that her company owns a stake in Azerfon.

When RFE/RL confronted the communications ministry with these denials, a spokesperson repeated that Siemens is an Azerfon shareholder. Azerfon's press office would not provide any shareholder information. RFE/RL obtained tax documents which showed that three Panama-registered companies each have a 24 percent stake in Azerfon, a company registered in Nevis has an 18 percent stake, and state-owned communications firm Aztelekom has a 10 percent stake. According to the Panama state registry, the owners and company treasurers of the three companies registered there are Leyla Aliyeva, the president's eldest daughter, and Arzu Aliyeva, the youngest daughter.

Mobile subscriptions rates have reached 110 per cent. It is estimated that about 31 percent of subscribers access the internet on their mobile phones. However, only about 50% of them are active mobile internet users.³³ There are four mobile operators Azercell (TeliaSonera is the major shareholder)³⁴, Bakcell, Catel/Fonex (currently suspended)³⁵ and Azerfon.

²⁹ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GITR/2012/GITR_Chapter2.1_2012.pdf

³⁰ <http://news.az/articles/tech/48980>

³¹ http://www.rferl.org/content/azerbaijan_president_aliyev_daughters_tied_to_telecoms_firm/24248340.html

³² Ibid

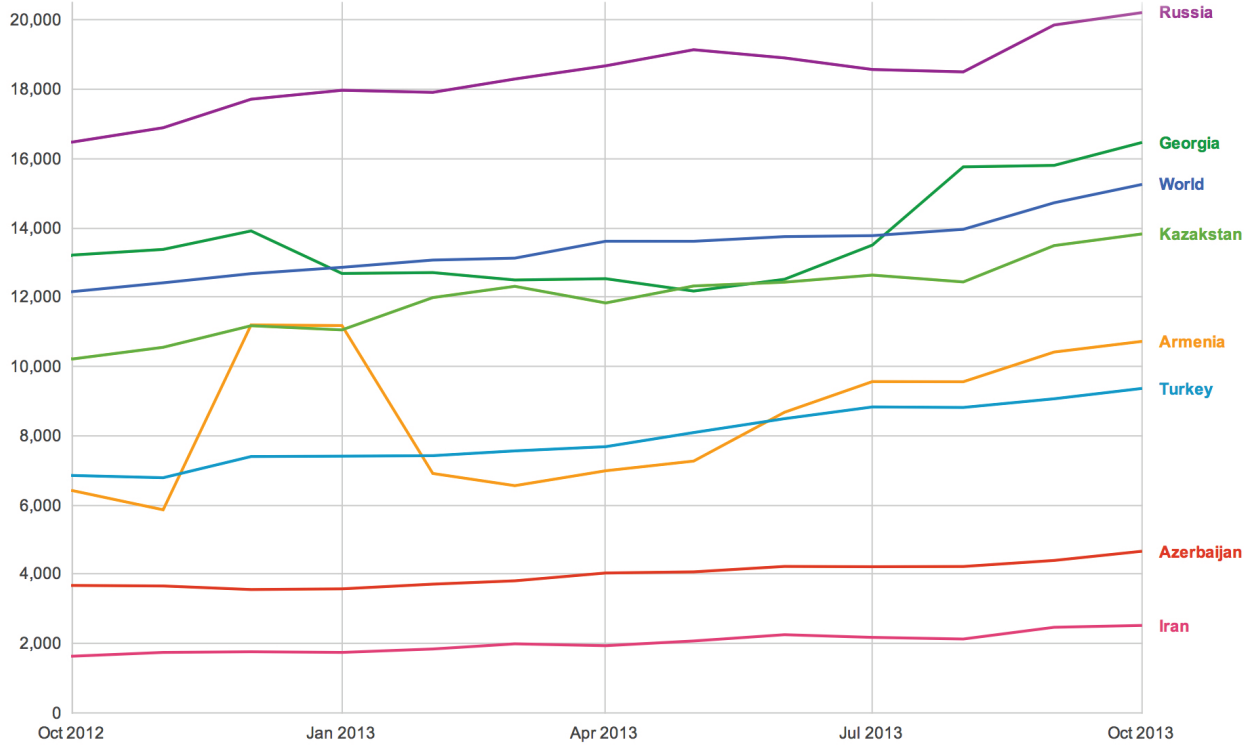
³³ http://expressiononline.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Report_EO_1.pdf pp. 48.

³⁴ <http://www.teliasonera.com/en/about-us/markets-and-brands/>

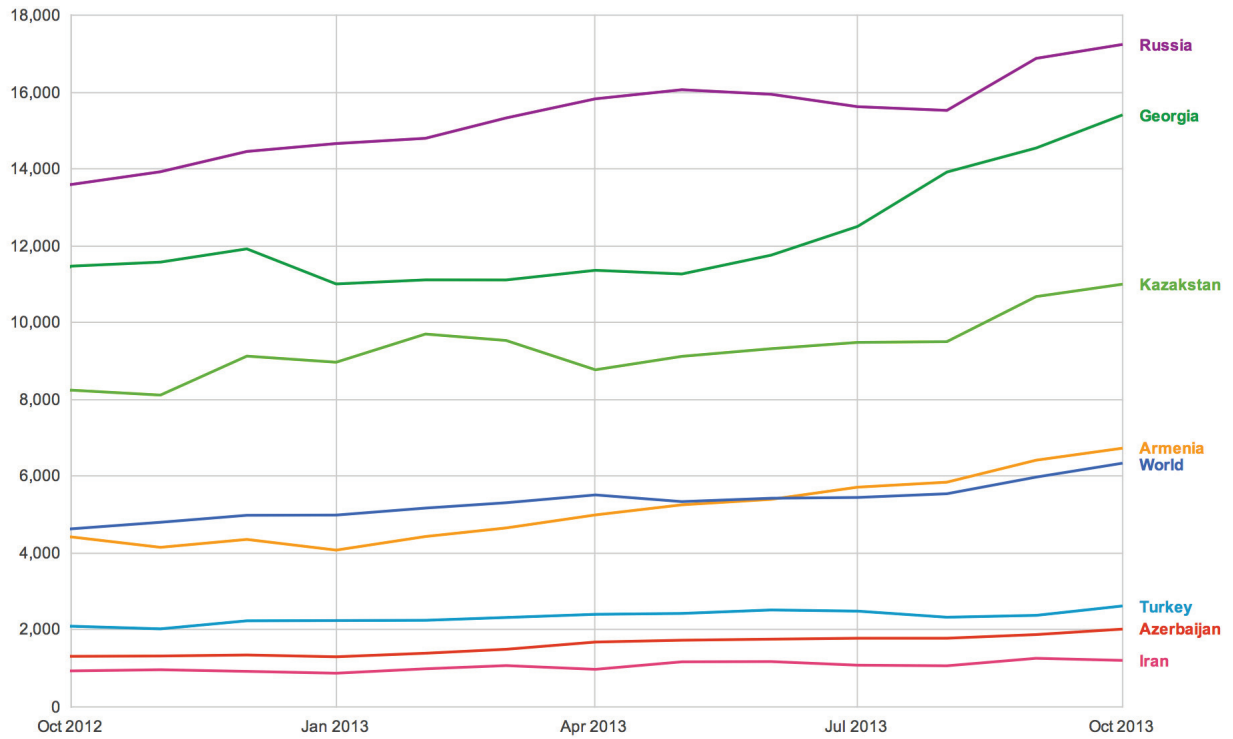
³⁵ <http://gilanholding.az/en/allnews.php?id=2044&cid=24>

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Download Speed



Upload Speed



Google public data from Net Index by Ookla

Azerbaijan Internet Penetration

Internet use in Azerbaijan is difficult to quantify, as most experts are skeptical about the reliability of official statistics. For instance, the State Statistical Committee reports a 70 percent penetration rate³⁶, with a quarter of connections made via dial up, over a third on broadband, but the largest percentage of connections are reportedly made via mobile internet.³⁷ Again, according to government sources, the majority of users have at least a secondary education and they access online content at home on a daily basis.³⁸

The highest percentage of users is between 7 and 24 years old. However, the number of users between 36 and 64 represent the fastest growing demographic according to official statistics.³⁹ The vast majority of online activity is split almost evenly between searching for information, communicating and downloading games, images and music. Training and education as well as dealing with public authorities are on par at about eight percent, while electronic commerce, ordering or selling goods and services, is a distant last, at under two percent.⁴⁰

A lack of transparency regarding the administration of the .az domain name persists. Several bloggers complained about not being able to register their preferred names. The private company Intrans has a monopoly on the registration of websites on the .az domain, with no independent oversight of the process.⁴¹ The “.az” domain cannot be obtained online and requires an in-person application and submission of ID, subjecting the process to bureaucratic red tape and possible corruption.

For instance, when an independent NGO requested a purchase of domain *secki2013.az* (Eng: election2013.az) for the website dedicated to provide 24/7 information on the Azerbaijan’s presidential election, the Intrans refused to sell this domain on the grounds that “the leadership of the company does not authorize its sale”.

Azerbaijan’s online population is growing at a slow but steady pace, and is developing a dynamic and politically engaged blogosphere. According to Freedom on the Net, there are more than 27,000 blogs in Azerbaijan, mostly written in the native language, with about a 1,000 available in English, Russian and other languages.⁴² An estimated 50,000 to 70,000 users regularly read blogs.⁴³ According to the Chairman of Azerbaijan’s Press Council, Aflatun Amashov argues there are only about 2,000 bloggers in Azerbaijan.

Household Internet connection ownership (this does not include mobile Internet) grew since significantly since 2009 - 17% of Azerbaijani homes have Internet while 21% of Azerbaijani homes have a computer and household mobile ownership penetration is over 100%.



Under the auspices of the USAID-funded Azerbaijan New Media Project and with support of the Ministry Communications and Information Technologies, IREX Azerbaijan has installed 30 kiosks providing free internet in remote villages across Azerbaijan. Photo: USAID

³⁶ ‘70% of Azerbaijan’s population is Internet users’. Interview with Azerbaijani Minister of Communications and Information Technologies Ali Abbasov <http://www.mincom.gov.az/media-en/interviews/details/42>

³⁷ <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.azstat.org/statinfo/communication/en/3.4.xls>

³⁸ <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.azstat.org/statinfo/communication/en/3.5.xls>

³⁹ <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.azstat.org/statinfo/communication/en/3.26.xls>

⁴⁰ <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.azstat.org/statinfo/communication/en/3.5.xls>

⁴¹ Article 19. October 2010. Free Expression under Attack: Azerbaijan’s Deteriorating Media Environment. Report of the International Freedom Mission to Azerbaijan. London: UK.

⁴² <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2012/azerbaijan>

⁴³ <http://regnum.su/news/fd-abroad/azeri/1379705.html>

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Chapter Two:

National legal framework for Internet freedom

The Constitution of the Azerbaijani Republic was adopted in 1995.⁴⁴ Amendments were made through referendums in 2002 and 2009.⁴⁵ The Constitution protects human rights and fundamental freedoms, including *inter alia* the right to freedom of thought and expression (Article 47), the right to freedom of assembly (Article 49), the right to access information (Article 50), and the right to freedom of association (Article 58).

Article 12 of the Constitution states that “The highest priority objective of the state is to provide for the rights and freedoms of a person and citizen.” Furthermore, Article 12 states that “The rights and freedoms of a person and citizen listed in the present Constitution are implemented in accordance with international treaties wherein the Azerbaijani Republic is one of the parties.”

Azerbaijan is party to all major regional and international human rights treaties guaranteeing freedom of expression, including the ICCPR and the ECHR. By virtue of Article 151 of the Constitution, international agreements binding upon Azerbaijan prevail over domestic legislation, with the exception of the Constitution itself and acts accepted by way of referendum. Thus, in the case of a conflict between the provisions of the ICCPR or the ECHR and the provisions of any domestic laws pertaining to Internet governance, the former shall prevail.

Under the Law on Mass Media of 1999, the internet is designated as a form of mass media, thus all rules applied to traditional media can be used to regulate the online sphere as well.

Criminal defamation online

On 4 June Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev signed into law amendments to the Criminal Code passed by parliament that would criminalize “defamatory and offensive views” posted on the Internet.⁴⁶ The amendments allow for the initiation of criminal cases against online activists who post such statements, with penalties of up to three years in prison. The first conviction came two months after the President approved the law – just two weeks after it took effect.

On 14 August the Astara Regional Court found Mikayil Talibov guilty of slander under Article 147.1 of the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan, sentencing him to one year of “corrective labor” under which 20 per cent of his monthly income would be deducted into the state budget for a period of one year.⁴⁷

In another case, Javad Javadov, the lawyer of an arrested theologian, was sued by the former investigator in his client’s case, for writing an absolutely uncritical post about the investigator on Facebook. Along with the lawyer, Azadliq newspaper was also litigated for re-publishing the post.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ <http://www.e-qanun.az/print.php?internal=view&target=1&docid=897&doctype=0>

⁴⁵ <http://www.e-qanun.az/print.php?internal=view&target=1&docid=897&doctype=0>

⁴⁶ <http://bit.ly/14gKMce>

⁴⁷ <http://bit.ly/1eE7en8>

⁴⁸ <http://bit.ly/1g8CQfW>

The following documents provide for the **technical regulation** of the Internet, Internet infrastructure, the relationship between Internet providers and users, directions of activities of Internet service providers and state control and regulation in this area.

“Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on telecommunications” comes at the beginning of the legislative framework of these relations. This law was passed by the Azerbaijani Parliament (Milli Meclis) on June 14, 2005 and came into force by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 277 issued on August 9, 2005.

Prior to this law, the relations in this sphere were regulated by the Law on Communications and had a very limited scope.

“Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on accession to the Charter and the Convention on the International Telecommunication Union, as well as the adjustment documents”, which covers the legal force of international regulations and thus opens up opportunities for the application of the international law in the national context. By adopting the law on May 14, 2000, the legislative organ of Azerbaijan, The Parliament (Milli Meclis) recognized the application of international legal regulations in the country.

The first law to stipulate the use of the Internet for ensuring information transparency of government agencies is the **“the Law of Azerbaijan Republic on access to information”**. Coming into force on December 9, 2005, “The Law of Azerbaijan Republic on the right to obtain information” provided a starting point for the use of Internet in the system of state administration. Article 29 of this Law provides a list of information to be disclosed by information owners. In addition to the available tools, the government agencies must disclose the information specified in that list **via the Internet** as well. By stating in its article 31 that *“If this obligation arises also based on requirements of Article 29.1 hereof, the public information is included in Internet Information Resources”*, the Law includes the Internet information resources among modern methods of disclosing information. Article 32 of the law puts forward the obligation to create Internet information resources, and the article 33 enumerates the requirements set for Internet Information Resources.

In 2005 the government of Azerbaijan Republic adopted a State Program on the Development of Communication and Information Technologies in Azerbaijan Republic for 2005-2008 (**Electron Azerbaijan**), in which it confessed to existence of a digital divide between the regions of the country, as one of the expected achievements of this program was intended to be *“Reduction of the “digital divide” existing among social strata, and between the rural and urban areas of the country”*.

However over the past 8 years, the progress in implementation of the state program is far from satisfactory. Serious problems still remain in the country’s Internet infrastructure. A lot of funds have been allocated for infrastructure from the State Oil Fund⁴⁹, but fiber optic cable system, necessary for high-speed Internet, especially in the rural areas, has not been set up.

The main problems of legal regulation of the Internet as “a means of telecommunication” in Azerbaijan Republic

The concept of Telecommunication was reflected in a broader sense in the Article 1 of the “Law on Telecommunications of the Republic of Azerbaijan” adopted on August 9, 2005 and it leaves no room for doubt that this definition also includes the Internet. Article 3 of this law covers main principles and directions of telecommunication activity. It is important that the law provides for the protection of the legal equality and interests of the operators, providers and users. However, in practice, these principles are not followed. Although it’s been repeatedly suggested that state and private providers are equal, in reality, state providers get more state funds and advantages in many cases.

⁴⁹ For more information refer to the previous chapter.

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It is also clearly visible in the relationship between subscribers and other parties. In particular, gross violation of this principle is apparent in the regulations, where only duties of the users are counted, but their rights are not stated.

Even in the existing principles certain controversial aspects are observed. For example, the principle “*adjusting tariff policy*” does not correspond with the principle “*prohibition of monopoly in telecommunication service market and ensuring of healthy competition*”. If the state authority holds the right to regulate tariffs, then it is contrary to the principles of fair competition and free market, because, the concept of regulation of tariff policy implies setting of tariffs by the government agency. In this case, it seems insincere to talk about free market and competitive development, and include this in the law as a principle.

Article 4 of the Law on Telecommunications determines objects and subjects of telecommunication activity. One of the noteworthy points here is that along with having a regulatory function, the state is also a market subject, i.e. the state acts not only as a regulator, but also one of the competitors in the market. It means being both a “player” and the “judge” in the market, and in this case, it is meaningless to talk about equality of the parties, their rights and opportunities, because private institutions do not have the same resources as the state bodies. It is no coincidence that today, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies has got more than fifty subordinate enterprises, LLCs and other commercial organizations. The state currently acts both as a service provider (an operator or provider) and a regulator by implementing oversight function, giving licenses, rights to use, etc. All telecommunications infrastructure is under the control of government institutions and it is quite expensive to use them. From this perspective, equality of parties is completely formal and does not correspond to reality.

Article 7.10 of the same law is one of the most disputable points. According to this article, “*rules of registration, use of domain titles of country code are regulated jointly by corresponding executive power body and **respective bodies** according to international norms*”. However the requirement “*together with respective bodies*” is never considered in practice during the implementation of the regulation. When fulfilling this condition, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies, which is defined as the “*corresponding executive power body*” by the President’s decree #277 on the application of the law on telecommunications issued on 9 August 2005, restrict the scope of the “*respective bodies*” to a limited number of organizations that are close to the ministry, keeping out main public institutions.

Regulation of healthy competitive environment and anti-monopoly activity in telecommunications sector

According to the Telecommunications Law, “*operators, providers, other legal and physical persons operating in field of telecommunication, as well device producers and suppliers are equal subjects in creation and development of telecommunication nets*”. However, we can say that there is a strong monopoly in the field of telecommunications. A significant portion of the Internet traffic imported into the country is controlled by the institutions created by the state or where the state is one of the participants. In addition, both in Baku and in the regions the majority of the Internet providers are state providers. Especially in the regions the Internet provider is mainly Aztelekom, which is a state institution. The Law also states that “*corresponding executive power bodies take actions set by legislation to prevent unfair competition and monopoly in field of telecommunication. Persons admitting unfair competition, violation of users’ interests and rights, or any illegal acts bear responsibility by legislation*”. However, as mentioned above, the body carrying out regulation and control, in fact, itself creates unfair competition. In this case, implementation of this provision of the law seems practically impossible.

Rules for using Internet communication services

Adopted on 24 February 2000, 5 years earlier than the Telecommunications Law, by order of the Minister of Communications of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the rules on the use of internet services do not meet modern demands. Some points in the introduced rules seem problematic from the legal viewpoint.

According to clause 4.2 of the “Rules for Using Internet Services,” Internet providers can suspend services provided to subscribers in certain cases without their consent: for example, if one of the parties to the contract, i.e. “the provider”, solely determines that the other party, i.e. “the user” violates the law, the former can therefore suspend its obligations. This is not in accordance with the principle of equality of parties.

Granting of this right to the provider in a unilateral manner is contrary to not only to the Law on Telecommunications, but also to requirements of Article 25 of the Constitution, the right to equality.

Another duty imposed on subscribers is avoidance of posting offensive information about individuals or legal persons or disclosing state secrets on Internet and web sites.

Though, in general, avoidance of posting offensive information can be understandable as a condition, its interpretation as *giving the provider a right to control online content* can instantly turn the “party fulfilling technical regulation” into a “censor” thereby undermining the internet freedom.

Network Security

According to article 39 of the Law on Telecommunications of the Republic of Azerbaijan *which requires mutual relationship of providers and operators with the bodies carrying out search operations, intelligence and counter-intelligence activities*, “operators and providers must promote in proper legal manner implementation of search actions, intelligence and counter-intelligence activities, supply telecommunication nets with **extra technical devices** according to terms set by corresponding executive power body for this goal, solve organizational issues and **keep methods used in implementation of these actions as secret.**” Disputable aspect of this article is the fact that it allows the “corresponding executive power body” to install **extra technical devices** in telecommunication nets without requiring a court order, under the veil of “implementation of search actions, intelligence and counter-intelligence activities”. It paves the way for obtaining of individuals’ private information and secrets by organizations without a court order, and unreasonable interception of their telephone conversations and online communication without provision of legal reasons or without judicial oversight.

Unless investigation of any specific fact or prosecution of a concrete suspect is the case, placement of any device directly to the network at the sole discretion of special service agencies, thereby allowing in the Law for interception of any individual’s personal communication without even the need for a court order, is sanctioning the intervention in conflict with the principles of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Existence of such a provision in the law is also in contradiction with the principle of the inviolability of private life provided for in the article 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Particularly, by allowing for such an interception at a sole discretion of the executive bodies without requiring a court order or judicial oversight, the law grants broad and unlimited power to executive bodies, no matter for what purpose, without providing for any legal means aimed at preventing the abuse of this power.

Clause 39.2 of the Law states that “*operator, provider bears responsibility for violation of these requirements in proper legal manner*”, i.e. for not installing in its network the device requested by the executive body without the need for a court order. Thus, the operator or the provider does not have any room for maneuver. Moreover, information leaks that would make public the cases of illegal bugging and prosecution are prevented by the frightening phrase that the operator and providers have to “keep methods used in implementation of these actions as secret”.

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Restrictions on Internet content

On May 14, 2013, the Azerbaijani Parliament (Milli Meclis) adopted a bill based on the changes to the articles 147 (libel) and 148 of the Criminal Code (insult) put forth by the General Prosecutor's Office. Before the change, only defamation on mass media stipulated liability. Internet was not mentioned in these articles.

After the amendment, Article 147 sets four types of punishment for **spreading libel** on internet information resources: a fine of 100-500 AZN, unpaid public works for up to 240 hours, or corrective labor for up to one year or imprisonment for a maximum of 6 months. According to the amended Article 148, the same punishments are applied for (insult) deliberate **humiliation** of honor and dignity of a person in an indecent way on the internet, the only difference is in the minimum and maximum amounts of the fine, which are 300 and 1000 AZN respectively.

In 2002, the government of Azerbaijan accepted the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights which monitors the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights. The government has undertaken a commitment to execute the Court's judgments. In judgments on the cases "Agazadeh and Mahmudov against Azerbaijan" of 2007 and "Fatullayev against Azerbaijan" of 2010, the Court has concluded that existence of criminal liability for defamation in Azerbaijan's criminal code is incompliant with the Convention and should therefore be changed with civil liability. Although in 2010 the Azerbaijani government officially announced that defamation would never be applied, in the recent 3 years more than 100 defamation lawsuits have been filed and journalists were arrested, and more surprisingly, despite that the discussion of a bill on decriminalization of defamation in the Azerbaijani Parliament (Milli Meclis) was included in the National Action Program, this never happened by the end of 2012, moreover, after a wave of social media protests against incorrect government policy in early 2013 online defamation provisions were promptly introduced and existing punishments were further toughened. Monetary penalties and the period of administrative arrest were increased nearly fourfold and the hours of compulsory work sanction was also extended. This step was a serious threat to Internet freedom.

Conclusion

This research makes it clear that the above-mentioned legal barriers that prevent freedom of the Internet must be replaced by more liberal regulations. The chances of the relevant executive authorities' interference with the Internet must be minimized. State bodies must only retain the legal regulatory function and not get involved in service provision sector. Conditions necessary for the development of private institutions must be created and all subordinate institutions of the Ministry must be privatized in a transparent manner. To make internet accessible in all parts of the country, all the residential areas, settlements and villages must be provided with fiber optic cables which ensure high-speed internet access. Providers must be enabled to make unhindered and inexpensive use of the whole communication infrastructure established so far at state expense. Regulation of the internet must be exercised by an institution determined by the online community within the framework of the rules ensuring protection of common interests of the online community which includes providers and users.

Agreements regulating legal relations between internet providers and subscribers should ensure equality of the rights of parties, the quality of service must be increased and a responsibility must be determined for it.

Internet must not be subject to illegal interventions and no one's confidentiality of online communication must be violated without a proper court decision. Installation of devices potentially violating the confidentiality of online communication in telecommunication nets though application of pressure on operators and providers at a sole initiative of executive bodies and without a court decision must be prevented.

The multi-stakeholder participation in the process of establishing the rules of registration and utilization of ".az" domains must be ensured and opportunities for public oversight on compliance of these rules with the law and the principle of transparency and their application must be increased.



Within the framework of the “Safe City” Initiative, Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Interior has setup an extensive network of video cameras to monitor public areas. Over 550 HD cameras have been placed in the capital city of Baku alone. Information captured by the cameras is utilized by all the of the country’s security and law enforcement entities. Photo: AzerTAC Agency

Chapter Three:

Restrictions on privacy

At both the international and regional levels, privacy is unequivocally recognized as a fundamental human right. The right to privacy is enshrined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 12), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, Article 17), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 16), and the International Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Article 14). At the regional level, the right to privacy is protected by the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 8).

The right to privacy is often understood as an essential requirement for the realization of the right to freedom of expression. Undue interference with individuals’ privacy can both directly and indirectly limit the free development and exchange of ideas. The article 17 of ICCPR refers directly to the protection from interference with “correspondence”, a term that should be interpreted to encompass all forms of communication, both online and offline. This right is required to be guaranteed against all such interferences and attacks whether they emanate from State authorities or from natural or legal persons. The obligations imposed by this article require the State to adopt legislative and other measures to give effect to the prohibition against such interferences and attacks as well as to the protection of this right⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ General Comment No. 16: The right to respect of privacy, family, home and correspondence, and protection of honour and reputation (Art. 17) : 08.04.1988. CCPR General Comment No. 16. (General Comments)

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In recent years, **illegal forms of surveillance** have increasingly been used as a means to pressure critical journalists, bloggers and activists in Azerbaijan. Data gleaned through illegal surveillance has been used in blackmail attempts against journalists, or to publicly humiliate and potentially discredit them, should they choose not to cooperate with the would-be blackmailers.

Both the act of illegal surveillance itself, and the public dissemination of data gathered from illegal surveillance practices, constitutes a serious violation of the right to privacy, which is a fundamental human rights provided for in a number of international and regional treaties which Azerbaijan has ratified. Violations of the right to privacy have implications for the exercise of other human rights, such as the right to freedom of expression and freedom of association.

Digital surveillance is a particularly growing threat to freedom of expression, as journalists, bloggers, social media activists, and human rights defenders are increasingly finding themselves the targets of monitoring by the authorities, who are working to eliminate criticism and dissent and prevent the distribution of unwelcome information.

Hidden cameras

The use of hidden cameras in journalists' places of residence has been a particularly egregious violation of privacy in several cases. Hidden cameras have been used to film intimate acts of critical journalists, which are then disseminated online, and/or broadcast via state-controlled television stations.

In October 2010, just two weeks ahead of the November 2010 parliamentary elections, opposition *Azadliq* newspaper editor **Azer Ahmedov** was targeted in this way. A video of him engaged in an intimate act, taken by a hidden camera, was first distributed via social media networks, and then broadcast via nationwide Lider TV on its evening news program "Seda." The segment was labeled "The Naked Truth of the Opposition."

In April 2011, in the midst of a series of protests in Baku inspired by the Arab Spring, *Azadliq* newspaper employees **Natiq Adilov** and **Qan Turali** were secretly filmed in their rooms at the Afra hotel in the Oguz region. The video was broadcast on Lider TV. The journalists filed a lawsuit against Lider TV, but it has been denied up through the Supreme Court. They are now preparing a submission for the European Court of Human Rights.

It should be noted that in these cases, the National Television and Radio Council (NTRC) did nothing to stop the broadcasts, despite the fact that they were illegal. The NTRC's lack of independence and transparency is examined in Chapter 5 of this report.

Khadija Ismayilova

In March 2012, prominent investigative journalist and RFE/RL correspondent Khadija Ismayilova was subjected to a blackmail attempt and subsequent gross violation of her right to privacy. She received a letter containing intimate photos of her and a note reading "Whore, behave. Or you will be defamed." Rather than be silenced, Ismayilova went public about the blackmail attempt. As a result, a sex video of her filmed by a hidden camera was posted to a number of websites.

During the reporting period, a fake pornographic video purporting to depict Ismayilova, was posted online, which has been included in greater detail in Chapter 1 of this report. Despite these violations and many other forms of pressure against her, Ismayilova has continued her investigative journalism, exposing issues the authorities would rather keep hidden, such as corruption and human rights abuses.

Mobile network surveillance

In April 2012, Swedish Public Service Broadcaster SVT released an investigative documentary, revealing in depth the extent to which Swedish-Finnish telecommunications firm TeliaSonera cooperates with intelligence services in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The documentary exposed how TeliaSonera's subsidiaries – including in Azerbaijan – allowed “black boxes” to be installed into their telecommunications networks, allowing for surveillance of all communications passing through the networks, including phone calls, texts, Internet usage, and billing data. According to SVT, such practices are ongoing.

During the reporting period, mobile phone surveillance was evident in one instance of pressure against RFE/RL Nakhchivan correspondent Yafez Akramoglu, which has been included in greater detail in Chapter 1 of this report.

Surveillance in public places

Azerbaijanis are being subjected to intrusive surveillance and data collection, often without their knowledge or consent. Actions that could constitute violations of the right to privacy are now being legalized by the government.

For example, since 2012, license plates assigned to vehicles sold within the country have been fitted with radio frequency identification (RFID) tags, allowing for special streetlights to determine vehicles' location and direction. RFID is the wireless, non-contact use of radio frequency electromagnetic fields to transfer data for the purposes of automatically identifying and tracking tags attached to an object. RFID tags mounted onto license plates identify the owner, identification number and type of vehicle.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has installed an urban security system with thousands of cameras that can recognize and track vehicles, and can detect people's faces, using smart video technology. The Ministry of Transportation has set up security cameras throughout the country.

Despite the pervasive presence of security cameras, the authorities have failed to use the videos obtained by these cameras in investigations into violence against journalists, such as the November 2011 murder of Rafiq Tagi. This calls into question the true purpose of such surveillance measures.



Mandatory registration of IMEI numbers

On 1 May, it became a mandatory requirement that every phone brought into Azerbaijan for personal use and operating on the SIM cards of the country's mobile operators must be registered no more than 30 days after the phone begins operating on a local network. The International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) code of each device must be registered with the Central Post Office. A further worrisome requirement is that identification cards must be presented to register mobile devices, although mobile operators already must record individuals' passport data when they buy a phone. If a phone owner fails to comply with this procedure, his or her phone will automatically be switched off from the local network.

One main justification for this strict requirement is that it is claimed to be a measure against phone theft. The IMEI number is used by a GSM network to identify valid devices, and can be used as a kill-switch that would render smartphones inoperable in the event that they are stolen. Other reasons provided for this requirement are to prevent mobile phones that do not meet certain technical standards from being brought into the country; and ensuring competition among manufacturers.

The Expression Online coalition considers these measures a violation of the right to privacy, and believes such measures should be voluntary, not compulsory.

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Chapter Four:

Social media and political activism

Strict government control over the traditional media has increased the role of the Internet in people's lives. At present, the number of internet users in Azerbaijan shows that people are informed about important events happening in the country through the Internet, and keep contact with each other via the Internet. In the recent years, the use of social media use has dramatically increased in Azerbaijan in the recent 2-3 years.

Social networking sites have also become an important additional arena for politics. Social networking sites have grown more important in recent years as a venue for political involvement, learning, and debate. Overall, 25% of all Azerbaijani social media users took part in some sort of political activity on a social networking site during the 2013 Presidential Election.

The most popular social networking websites among Azerbaijanis are Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. Overall, 30% of Azerbaijani netizens use a variety of social media sites in Azerbaijan. Each person generally has 1 to 3 social media platforms and refer to these alternately depending on their activities, job or lifestyle. As of October 2013, there are almost 1, 500 000 social media users in Azerbaijan.

Facebook

As of October 2013:

- 1,250,000 Azerbaijanis have an existing account on Facebook
- Men - 800,000- 64 %
- Women - 450,000- 36%

By age groups, Azerbaijani Facebook users are divided in the following way:

- users aged 13-17 - 25%
- users aged 18-28 - 62.5%
- users aged 29-35 - 11.5%
- users aged 36-46 - 0.6%
- users aged 47-57 - 0.2 %
- users aged above 58 - 0.1%
- It is not a surprise that 74% of Facebook users are youth.
- 32 % Azerbaijanis use Facebook for business (purchase and sale) and entertainment
- 40% for news and social affairs

One of the problems with Facebook in Azerbaijan, is the ability of Facebook users to restrict each-other's activity by submitting complaints/reports to Facebook administration. As such, popular Facebook groups and pages administered/moderated by opposition or pro-government persons have been removed due to complaints/reports from the pro-governmental users.

At the same time, major social networks such as Facebook and V Kontakte carry out an audit of group members and if they observe that a person has been placed in a group without her/his knowledge or that there are fake profiles, then these groups are removed by network administrators. As such, on June 6 the groups “İstefa” (Resign) and “Xilas” (Salvation) of two major opposition parties Azerbaijan Popular Front and Musavat were deleted. At the same time, the groups “Support to President-2013”, “Vision to Azerbaijan” and “Azerbaijan 2013: Victory!” that are related to the authorities have also been taken down.

According to the group admins, they had not received any warning or notification prior to their accounts being suspended. Besides, they did not allow for posting of any material promoting violence in the group. Given this, closure of these groups raises some questions.

The Expression Online experts believe that relatively slow increase in the number of Facebook users is directly related to the suspension of Facebook zero service (free of charge) provided by mobile operators Azercell and Bakcell. The mobile operators were urged by the authorities to stop this service because of the youth’s active use of Facebook to promote their organized protests.



An Election Day Facebook poll on the Facebook page secki.az asking the question “Who did you vote for?” was deleted by Facebook after numerous spurious complaints were sent by people alleging the poll incited violence. Screenshots from fb.com/secki.az

Youtube

According to Socialbakers’ statistics⁵¹, there are 154 channels on Youtube registered from Azerbaijan, of which only 100 channels boast significant number of views.

The top popular Youtube account is Azerbaijan-Baku, an entertainment channel that broadcast music and soap operas.

The top 100 YouTube channels registered in Azerbaijan each have over 1 million views.

Although entertaining videos are most popular among viewers, 20% of the most viewed videos are political, social and critical programs.

Youtube’s popularity in Azerbaijan has risen in the recent three years. However, it should be specifically underscored that, 95% of Azerbaijani Youtube channels are engaged in violation of copyright.

Only several online television channels upload their unique content on Youtube and function as well-established channels. For example, Obyektiv TV channel, which produces its own content, gets on average 25,000 views a day.

The Expression Online research shows that the number of daily hits of youtube channels are several times more than the number of views of the similar content presented in text format on Azerbaijan’s news websites.

Social networks like Google+ and LinkedIn are not so popular in Azerbaijan at present and less people use it. Although people open accounts in these networking sites because of interest, they don’t usually use them.

Social network tool Instagram has recently become to be widely used in Azerbaijan. Some 400,000 Azerbaijani are active users of V Kontakte and Odnoklassniki social networks. In comparison with the previous year, the Expression Online experts have observed a decline in the number of V Kontakte users due to this social network’s resemblance of Facebook and people preference to the latter.

⁵¹ socialbakers.com/

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Twitter

Twitter still remains as a not-so-widely-used social network in Azerbaijan. Although some politicians, human rights defenders and activists do tweet, the Twitter is not still used by many netizens. According to Aztwi's statistics⁵², there are more than 4,000 Twitter users in Azerbaijan.

The twenty most popular Azerbaijani Twitter accounts (those with the largest score of readers/followers) are run by youth activists, leading media organizations and human rights activists.

Currently 32,000 twitter users demonstrate regular interest in Azerbaijan-related content. One of the most popular Azerbaijan's Twitter account is the one of the Radio Liberty, which enjoys 7,694 readers. The top level official at the Presidential Office, Elnur Aslanov has 4,000 followers on Twitter. Azerbaijani most popular opposition leaders, do not have more than 3,000 followers each.

President Ilham Aliyev joined the Twittersphere in July 2010 with two accounts, @azpresident in Azerbaijani (61,650 followers) and @presidentaz in English (52,878 followers).

However Azerbaijani are more on Facebook than on Twitter. Twitter serves for provision of information about/ from Azerbaijan to foreigners or foreign organizations, rather than to the Azerbaijani public. In overall, the average number of global Twitter users showing interest to Azerbaijan is more than 50,000.

Although tweets about Azerbaijan are followed by some 50,000 users worldwide, the fact that the number of Azerbaijani micro-bloggers are just above 4,000 shows that Twitter's popularity fall much behind Facebook's. 18-20 well-known media outlet's have Twitter accounts.

This statistics shows that the number of Twitter users in Azerbaijan constitutes 3,000. The number of president Ilham Aliyev's followers being more than 50,000 also raises some question.

A research by the Expression Online has found that Azerbaijani micro-bloggers chose Facebook as their most important social network. For example, well-known blogger Mehman Huseynov has 77,000 followers on Facebook, with relatively modest number of 2,545 followers on Twitter. Another example, satirical blog Hamam Times enjoys 109,000 followers on Facebook, while the same blog has only 1,269 followers.

If Facebook has obviously had large impact on shaping public opinions in Azerbaijan, Twitter is largely used as a tool to transfer data from Azerbaijan to international community.

Twitter hashtag analysis

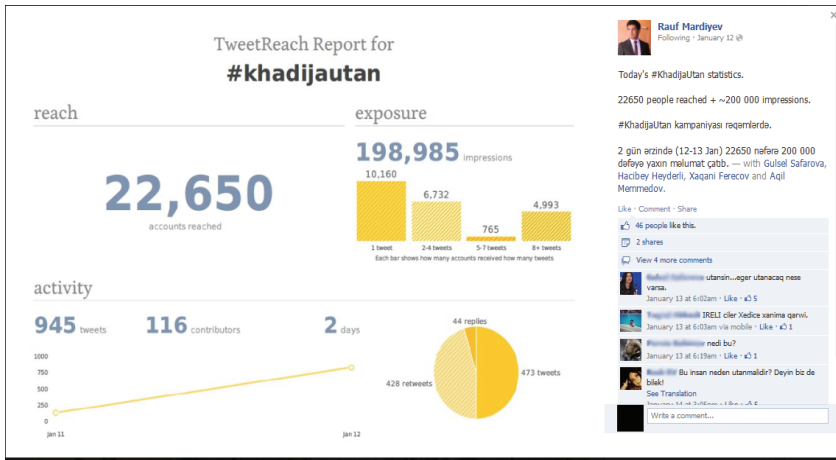
While Twitter is not nearly as popular in Azerbaijan as Facebook is, some elite users do engage with it. Twitter posts often duplicate Facebook posts (for both individuals and organizations), but one difference is that analytic tools about reach are readily available while analytics on a Facebook post are less accessible. This ability to measure social media reach is attractive to some social media users because it allows for demonstration of support, the first tool in the tool kit. The pro-government youth group chairman is particularly boastful about the number of tweets that his group's sponsored hashtags receive or "winning" with the largest percentage of Twitter posts. The interest in having metrics for and "winning" hashtags is a perfect example of digital tools allowing for boasting that supporters exist, the first tool in the tool kit (Schatz, 2009).⁵³

Hashtags are keywords to organize information to describe a tweet and aid in searching (Small, 2011).⁵⁴ When a hashtag "trends" – it is noted by Twitter as being popular at a particular time. Users want a hashtag to trend

⁵² aztwi.com

⁵³ <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40599210>

⁵⁴ <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369118X.2011.554572#.UI1-dlCTy6I>



to gain visibility and attention (Recuero & Araujo, 2012).⁵⁵ While occasionally hashtags trend organically, it is much more common that hashtags are artificially pushed to the trending list (Recuero & Araujo, 2012).⁵⁶

The pro-government youth group members create hashtags to troll and attack particular individuals. For example, investigative journalist Khadija Ismaylova was the victim of a hashtag campaign “Shame on Khadija” #khadijautan.⁵⁷ The pro-government youth group chairman proudly displayed the large reach that the anti-Ismaylova hashtag, the anti-Ruslan Asad, and an anti-N!DA hashtag supposedly had. The ability to show evidence of reach is an effective way to show everyone that there is support for the government.



Hashtag hijacking

When a hashtag is proposed for an event or topic, the intention is for a community of users to share information with each other. When a

hashtag is hijacked, a group of individuals “take over” a hashtag by posting messages unrelated to the “spirit” of the hashtag. For example, #armvote13 was about reports of election violations and election results, and people were using it to write things against Armenia and Armenians. The pro-government youth group engaged in hashtag hijacking for all of the 2013 Azerbaijan protests⁵⁸, #armvote13⁵⁹, and #armeniangenocide,⁶⁰ and all of the 2013 Azerbaijani election hashtags⁶¹ to varying degrees of success. By successfully taking over

* <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151177550702026&set=pb.588227025.-2207520000.1367959216.&type=3&theater>

** <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=484983228217689&set=pb.130436410339041.-2207520000.1367948139.&type=3&theater>

⁵⁵ <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2309996.2310046>

⁵⁶ <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2309996.2310046>

⁵⁷ <http://www.katypearce.net/khadijautan-update/>

⁵⁸ <http://www.katypearce.net/protestbaku-now-that-the-weekend-is-over-what-happened/>

⁵⁹ <http://www.katypearce.net/armvote13-hashtag-got-taken-over-looks-suspicious/>

⁶⁰ <http://www.katypearce.net/why-is-it-impossible-to-hijack-armeniangenocide-on-twitter-hye-jack/>

⁶¹ <http://www.katypearce.net/shenanagins-again-and-again/>

FALSE FREEDOM

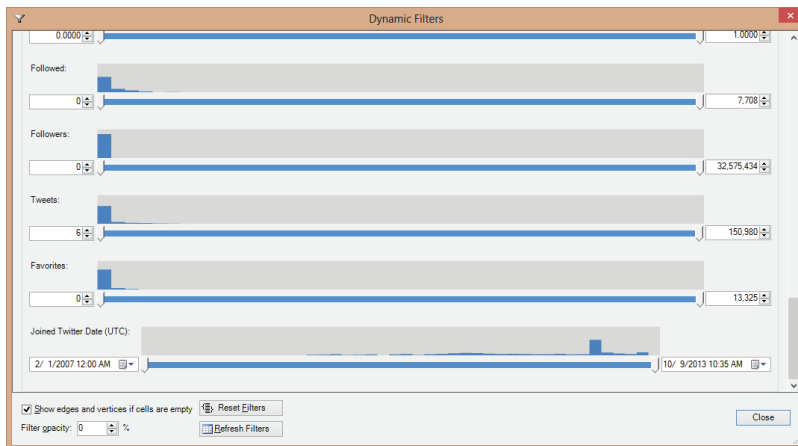
Internet freedom in Azerbaijan after the 7th Internet Governance Forum
The Expression Online Initiative. October, 2013

hashtags, the pro-government youth groups can destroy the affordances that Twitter provides. For example, during a protest Twitter can serve promotional purposes, give locationally situated information (such as police presence), and allow for live reporting (Earl, McKee Hurwitz, Mejia Mesinas, Tolan, & Arlotti, 2013; Penney & Dadas, 2013).^{62,63} Hijacking damages these affordances and takes the alleged power of social media back. Thus, this is another example of controlling information flow as a tool.

Zombie tweets

To get high numbers of users on a hashtag or hijack an existing hashtag, the pro-government youth group has had to coordinate its members to use the hashtag and tweet on it. It appears that the pro-government youth group members are either directed to tweet statements *or*, more likely, that someone at the pro-government youth group has control (password access) to members' Twitter accounts. In the images below, you can see that the same text was posted on Twitter by multiple accounts, only a few minutes apart. This is indicative of a Twitter client or service that allows for massive posting from multiple accounts nearly simultaneously. (Tweets in red/pink are exact duplicates).

It also appears that fake Twitter accounts were created using Azerbaijani names. With a large number of accounts created in a few days in February 2013 (the image is from users of the #azvot13 hashtag).



It became apparent that many accounts were created simultaneously.

	A	Q	R	S	T	U	V
1							
2	Vertex	Tweet	URLs in	Domains in	Hashtags in	Tweet Date	Twitter
3						(UTC)	for Tweet
4	17	fxaqani	Planlan baş tutmadı, Molotovsz qə protestbaku ar	3/10/2013 8:02	https://		
5	18	GunayEmra	Planlan baş tutmadı, Molotovsz qə protestbaku ar	3/10/2013 8:45	https://		
6	19	ArxayFerec	Planlan baş tutmadı, Molotovsz qə protestbakupic	3/10/2013 8:06	https://		
7	20	SevinjKasur	Planlan baş tutmadı, Molotovsz qə protestbakupic	3/10/2013 9:19	https://		
8	21	adilogluadi	Praqada oturub Bakıda insanları mit bakuprotest ar	#####	https://		
9	22	ArxayFerec	Protest Baku starts with Molotov #10mart moloto	#####	https://		
10	23	MuradAgab	Protest Baku starts with Molotov #10mart moloto	#####	https://		
11	24	Aziza_Mzad	Protest Baku starts with Molotov #10mart moloto	#####	https://		
12	25	Aslan_Azim	Protestors of the year: 2003-Isa Gan ireli molotovu	#####	https://		
13	26	imam_guliy	Protestors of the year: 2003-Isa Gan protestbaku m	#####	https://		
14	27	Narmin_Ma	Protestors of the year: 2003-Isa Gan protestbaku m	#####	https://		
15	28	mahmudza	Protestors of the year: 2003-Isa Gan protestbaku m	#####	https://		
16	29	fxaqani	Protestors of the year: 2003-Isa Gan protestbaku m	#####	https://		
17	30	Vusal_Qas	Protestors of the year: 2003-Isa Gan protestbaku m	#####	https://		
18	31	MuradAgab	Protestors of the year: 2003-Isa Gan protestbaku m	#####	https://		
19	32	Aziza_Mzad	Protestors of the year: 2003-Isa Gan protestbaku m	#####	https://		
20	33	Nazaket_Al	Protestors of the year: 2003-Isa Gan protestbaku m	#####	https://		
21	34	bekirli_elvi	Protestors of the year: 2003-Isa Gan protestbaku m	#####	https://		
22	35	Orxan_Eliy	Protestors of the year: 2003-Isa Gan protestbaku m	#####	https://		
23	36	sariyyaabuz	Protestors of the year: 2003-Isa Gan protestbaku m	#####	https://		
24	37	Narmin_Ma	Pul qazanmagin yeni usulu muxalif protestbaku m	3/10/2013 8:12	https://		
25	38	IsaMuradov	Pul qazanmagin yeni usulu muxalif protestbaku m	3/10/2013 8:17	https://		
26	39	MuradAgab	Pul qazanmagin yeni usulu muxalif protestbaku m	3/10/2013 8:13	https://		
27	40	RHesenov	Pul qazanmagin yeni usulu muxalif molotovluceni	3/10/2013 8:16	https://		
28	41	Aslan_Azim	Qaya qrupunun mahnis: "Ay Xedice molotovluceni	3/10/2013 8:30	https://		
29	42	bekirli_elvi	Qaya qrupunun mahnis: "Ay Xedice molotovluceni	#####	https://		
30	43	RHesenov	Qaya qrupunun mahnis: "Ay Xedice molotovluceni	3/10/2013 8:33	https://		
31	44	nargizgurba	Qaya qrupunun mahnis: "Ay Xedice molotovluceni	3/10/2013 8:34	https://		
32	45	MuradAgab	Qaya qrupunun mahnis: "Ay Xedice molotovluceni	3/10/2013 8:35	https://		
33	46	IkoAhmadz	Qaya qrupunun mahnis: "Ay Xedice molotovluceni	3/10/2013 8:37	https://		
34	47	RaufMardiy	Rebecca Vincent isn't important en ireli azerbaijan	3/9/2013 23:48	https://		
35	48	RaufMardiy	Rebecca Vincent ireli'dan 152 tvit ireli molotovu	3/9/2013 23:49	https://		
36	49	Quseynov9	Rebecca Vincent ireli'dan 152 tvit ireli molotovu	3/10/2013 0:01	https://		
37	50	EdibAyar	RT @AnarAsadov: bu da demokratia molotovluceni	3/10/2013 8:30	https://		
38	51	xalid90	RT @ArxayFereci: @eminmili artq molotovluceni	3/10/2013 8:25	https://		
39	52	farxadibra	RT @ArxayFereci: @eminmili artq molotovluceni	3/10/2013 8:27	https://		
40	53	Quseynov9	RT @ArxayFereci: @eminmili artq molotovluceni	3/10/2013 8:54	https://		
41	54	RHesenov	RT @ArxayFereci: @eminmili artq molotovluceni	3/10/2013 9:09	https://		

	A	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
1								
2	Vertex	Tweet	URLs in	Domains in	Hashtags in	Tweet Date	Twitter Page	
3						(UTC)	for Tweet	
4	1	Mammadov	1-clarin Geleceyi 7 altindadirli: #10 mart protest	3/10/2013 8:28	https://twitter.com/#/			
5	2	sariyyaabuz	1-clarin Geleceyi 7 altindadirli: #10 mart protest	3/10/2013 8:53	https://twitter.com/#/			
6	3	RHesenov	1-clarin Geleceyi 7 altindadirli: #10 mart protest	3/10/2013 8:21	https://twitter.com/#/			
7	4	xalid90	1-clarin Geleceyi 7 altindadirli: #10 mart protest	3/10/2013 8:23	https://twitter.com/#/			
8	5	MuradAgab	1-clarin Geleceyi 7 altindadirli: #10 mart protest	3/10/2013 8:24	https://twitter.com/#/			
9	6	IkoAhmadz	1-clarin Geleceyi 7 altindadirli: #10 mart protest	3/10/2013 8:26	https://twitter.com/#/			
10	7	Aziza_Mzad	1-clarin Geleceyi 7 altindadirli: #10 mart protest	3/10/2013 8:26	https://twitter.com/#/			
11	8	nargizgurba	1-clarin Geleceyi 7 altindadirli: #10 mart protest	3/10/2013 8:58	https://twitter.com/#/			
12	9	sariyyaabuz	Onlarin fikri ile: Demokratiya,parli molotovluceni	3/10/2013 9:48	https://twitter.com/#/			
13	10	sariyyaabuz	@Mekte http://qus wordpress.com molotovluceni	#####	https://twitter.com/#/			
14	11	sariyyaabuz	@RaufMardiyev: Bir qoxlan #molot molotovluceni	3/10/2013 9:46	https://twitter.com/#/			
15	12	IsaMuradov	@RaufMardiyev: Rebecca Vincent ireli azerbaijan	3/10/2013 5:17	https://twitter.com/#/			
16	13	mutaliboglu	"cihil,asmaq insanlarn bayram gatu 10mart moloto	3/10/2013 8:27	https://twitter.com/#/			
17	14	nargizgurba	"Demokratik Gender" Molotovia Ge molotovluceni	3/10/2013 7:45	https://twitter.com/#/			
18	15	IkoAhmadz	"Demokratik Gender" Molotovia Ge molotovluceni	3/10/2013 7:55	https://twitter.com/#/			
19	16	TalehAli	"Esker olumune son " aksiyasinda "i molotovluceni	3/10/2013 7:40	https://twitter.com/#/			
20	17	Mammadov	"Esker olumune son " aksiyasinda "i molotovluceni	3/10/2013 7:42	https://twitter.com/#/			
21	18	Vusal_Qas	"Esker olumune son " aksiyasinda "i molotovluceni	3/10/2013 7:43	https://twitter.com/#/			
22	19	IsaMuradov	"Esker olumune son " aksiyasinda "i molotovluceni	3/10/2013 7:44	https://twitter.com/#/			
23	20	fxaqani	"Esker olumune son " aksiyasinda "i molotovluceni	3/10/2013 7:45	https://twitter.com/#/			
24	21	IkoAhmadz	"Esker olumune son " aksiyasinda "i molotovluceni	3/10/2013 7:57	https://twitter.com/#/			
25	22	MuradAgab	"Esker olumune son " aksiyasinda "i molotovluceni	3/10/2013 7:43	https://twitter.com/#/			
26	23	sariyyaabuz	"Esker olumune son " aksiyasinda "i molotovluceni	3/10/2013 7:44	https://twitter.com/#/			
27	24	HacibeyHe	"Facebook" evente qoqulacagini de protestbaku IC	#####	https://twitter.com/#/			
28	25	Mammadov	"Facebook" evente qoqulacagini de protestbaku IC	#####	https://twitter.com/#/			
29	26	AleksKarar	"Inqilablar besyeriyetin lokomotivi karimax molo	3/10/2013 3:09	https://twitter.com/#/			
30	27	sariyyaabuz	"Nidaclar, "durgu" isarelerine horm protestbaku IC	3/10/2013 9:02	https://twitter.com/#/			
31	28	Narmin_Ma	"RIAL" is the supporter of oppositio protestbaku m	3/10/2013 9:59	https://twitter.com/#/			
32	29	nargizgurba	"RIAL" is the supporter of oppositio protestbaku m	3/10/2013 9:59	https://twitter.com/#/			
33	30	farxadibra	"Артисты" уличного театра Нида x protestbaku m	#####	https://twitter.com/#/			
34	31	Aziza_Mzad	"Артисты" уличного театра Нида x protestbaku m	#####	https://twitter.com/#/			
35	32	AbdullaOrk	#10March #bakuprotest is not due to 10mart baku	#####	https://twitter.com/#/			
36	33	GulseSafar	#10Mart b http://www.youtube.com 10mart moloto	3/10/2013 8:05	https://twitter.com/#/			
37	34	brillio90	#10Mart b http://www.youtube.com 10mart moloto	3/10/2013 8:10	https://twitter.com/#/			
38	35	RaufMardiy	#10Mart b http://www.youtube.com 10mart moloto	3/10/2013 8:03	https://twitter.com/#/			
39	36	Orxan_Eliy	#10Mart b http://www.youtube.com 10mart moloto	#####	https://twitter.com/#/			
40	37	MuratAzah	#10Mart b http://www.youtube.com 10mart moloto	#####	https://twitter.com/#/			

⁶² <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369118X.2013.777756#.UI1-2VCTy6l>

⁶³ <http://nms.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/03/13/1461444813479593.full.pdf>



NodeXLGraph2 - Excel

	A	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR
1							
2	Vertex	Joined Twitter Date (UTC)	Custom Menu Item Text	Custom Menu Item Action	Tweeted Search Term	Top URLs in Tweet by Count	Top URLs in Tweet by Salience
99	radamedova	2/14/2013 15:48	Open Twitter P	http://twitter.co	Yes		
100	goalthedef	2/13/2013 18:25	Open Twitter P	http://twitter.co	Yes		
101	nermalizade	2/13/2013 18:24	Open Twitter P	http://twitter.co	Yes		
102	neranadia	2/13/2013 18:22	Open Twitter P	http://twitter.co	Yes		
103	ladylovely10	2/13/2013 18:20	Open Twitter P	http://twitter.co	Yes		
104	lovelovinka	2/13/2013 18:17	Open Twitter P	http://twitter.co	Yes		
105	bakubakinka	2/13/2013 18:16	Open Twitter P	http://twitter.co	Yes		
106	lillena1	2/13/2013 18:15	Open Twitter P	http://twitter.co	Yes		
107	evalongerla	2/13/2013 18:13	Open Twitter P	http://twitter.co	Yes		
108	lmeacidova	2/13/2013 18:11	Open Twitter P	http://twitter.co	Yes		
109	ninabadalova	2/13/2013 16:58	Open Twitter P	http://twitter.co	Yes		
110	zamiq49	2/13/2013 16:54	Open Twitter P	http://twitter.co	Yes		

And those accounts created at the same time all tweeted the same message at the exact same minute.

And with a reverse image search on the profile photographs for these users, it was shown that these profile photographs were downloaded images used on numerous websites.

The second technique that the pro-government youth group uses is purchasing fake Twitter accounts to both tweet messages on a particular hashtag and to “follow” particular the pro-government youth group users in order to make it appear that they have a larger audience than they actually have, engaging the first tool of boasting support.

ireli - Excel

	A	B	K	N	O	P	Q	U	V	W	
1											
2	Vertex	Vertex	Graph Metrics	Other Columns	Relationship	Relationship Date (UTC)	Tweet	Tweet Date (UTC)	Twitter Post for Tweet	Latitude	Longitude
793	ajtagoveli	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/ajtagoveli		
800	genclikse	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/genclikse		
801	zeynalove	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/zeynalove		
802	hamidah	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/hamidah		
803	emilalige	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/emilalige		
804	necefisam	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/necefisam		
805	guluagage	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/guluagage		
806	sedanovri	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/sedanovri		
807	fatya22fat	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/fatya22fat		
808	fatehmurs	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/fatehmurs		
809	agdanhasi	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/agdanhasi		
810	lamanhao	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/lamanhao		
811	rijadhasai	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/rijadhasai		
812	zemacafal	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/zemacafal		
813	arifmamm	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/arifmamm		
814	afagbagir	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/afagbagir		
815	gunelndi	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/gunelndi		
816	sarababay	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/sarababay		
817	natiqsafar	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/natiqsafar		
818	naibabagi	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/naibabagi		
819	qaragevns	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/qaragevns		
820	rufanaghi	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/rufanaghi		
821	karimoms	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/karimoms		
822	userretve	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/userretve		
823	nazacelili	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/nazacelili		
824	raminbra	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/raminbra		
825	naraqasari	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/naraqasari		
826	lanavasano	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/lanavasano		
827	maharram	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/maharram		
828	elshad_6	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/elshad_6		
829	lamijahun	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/lamijahun		
830	nijazimus	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/nijazimus		
831	rumatagi	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/rumatagi		
832	memaralli	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/memaralli		
833	renkagage	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/renkagage		
834	melhdislr	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/melhdislr		
835	nazlicahar	mammad.No			Mentions	10/9/2013 16:28	RT @M	10/9/2013 16:28	https://twitter.com/nazlicahar		

This image tracks the pro-government youth group's chairman's personal Twitter account.



In an analysis of this individual's followers, the majority are obviously fake accounts. Normally Twitter users have written at least one tweet and follow some people. Furthermore, no native English speaker would write his or her location as CANADA, Regina or USA, Connecticut. (The second column is number of followers, the third is number of tweets.)

8606	Doogan_73896	0	6	5	thinks that friends help you move but real friends help you mo	Canada, Greater Sudbury
8607	Kris74495	0	6	5	a close talker	Canada, Edmonton
8608	Trautman_33216	0	6	5	He who laughs last thinks slowest.	CANADA, Halifax
8609	Echokmoza	1	6	5	sdrawkcab gnipyT	Canada, Richmond
8610	Lakesha98868	0	6	4	isn't buying an apple ipad. Period of time.	Canada, Toronto
8611	Melia_4704	0	6	5	is so cool which he wasn't delivered, he had been let loo	CANADA, Edmonton
8612	Makins_04213	0	6	5	Just saved a bunch of money on my Mental Insurance by switc	CANADA, Medicine Hat
8613	Pfenning_81568	0	6	5	Will not bump weather; nine-tenths of those could not take u	CANADA, Iqaluit
8614	Blanch_5735	0	6	5	's friend, Eddie, spends several hours a day lubricating a	CANADA, Regina
8615	Audry48673	0	6	5	considers which friends assist you to shift but actual buddies	Canada, Ottawa
8616	Lucienne49333	0	6	5		
8617	Iona_aocc	0	6	5	sure that they underestimated me!	Canada, Lethbridge
8618	Berthamxpsg	0	6	5	is actually telling you in which ?42. Several pct of data are mac	Canada, Grande Prairie
8619	Kelliyeszv	0	6	5	when I'm at the supermarket I like to look at my cashier :	Canada, Grande Prairie
8620	Freddie_5805	0	6	5	Researchers at the Mayo Clinic have found a way to slow the z	Canada, Iqaluit
8621	Dayna_9303	0	6	5	Most of us can keep a key. It is the individuals all of us inform	CANADA, Medicine Hat
8622	Sherise54655	0	6	5		
8623	Blondell_estz	0	6	5	wonders is the Hokey Pokey is really what it's all ab	CANADA, Iqaluit
8624	Elida_iubl	0	6	5	isn't Fifty. I am \$49.95 additionally tax.	Canada, Greater Sudbury
8625	Rubner_97739	0	6	5	needs somebody to answer for me, what is it exactly that the	Canada, Fredericton
8626	Victoria27537	0	6	5		
8627	Clarissa18307	0	6	5	In the event that in the beginning you are trying and don't	CANADA, Medicine Hat
8628	Alanalzdpj	0	6	5	when I'm at the supermarket I like to look at my cashier :	Canada, Yellowknife
8629	Keniston_70315	0	6	5	should win best performance in pretending to understand the	CANADA, Charlottetown
8630	Harp_39890	0	6	4		
8631	Claudiaxchug	0	6	5	is actually remembering North america Day putting on their t	CANADA, Hamilton
8632	Merrilee02630	0	6	5	not the droid you're looking for.	CANADA, Lethbridge
8633	Cervantes_75444	0	6	5	didn't say it was your fault... I'm just blaming you...	CANADA, Red Deer
8634	Suellen_ybeh	0	6	5	The USA should invade the USA and win the hearts and minds	CANADA, Mississauga
8635	Shalon_wlud	0	6	5		
8636	Michael_8101	0	6	5	wonders if illiterate people get the full effect of Alphabet Soup	Canada, Calgary
8637	Isaura_pueg	1	6	5	is going around telling people that you're really 16	Canada, Medicine Hat
8638	Creoladpejl	0	6	5	bubble boy	Canada, Montreal
8639	Faraj_08979	0	6	5		
8640	Anneliese_2206	0	6	5	's friend, Eddie, spends several hours a day lubricating a	Canada, Richmond Hill
8641	Risa_zivh	0	6	5	raging against the machine!	Canada, Whitehorse
8642	Shanicejpwle	0	6	5	is rushing to KFC to get a Double Down Combo... Fries, Drink a	Canada, Calgary
8643	Consuelo_4093	0	6	5		
8644	Tatiana_bylm	1	6	5	believes at the woman's age, getting lucky signifies findi	Canada, Sault Ste. Marie
8645	Kenneth_3757	0	6	5	is having a beer on this glorious Sunday morning. After all, bee	CANADA, Red Deer
8646	Consuela80526	0	6	5	allow canines out there	CANADA, Toronto
8647	Brande_6955	0	6	5		
8648	Migneault_88147	0	6	5	in a gadda da vida baby	CANADA, Mississauga
8649	Seanhdond	0	6	5	wonders if illiterate people get the full effect of Alphabet Soup	Canada, Barrie
8650	Neidatimes	0	6	5	is DANGEROUSLY under-medicated.	CANADA, Winnipeg
8651	Devindqrgx	0	6	5	says there's my life. Deal with it. Oh, wait, can't prc	Canada, Grande Prairie
8652	Amyloydr	0	6	5	InchesDude what exactly are an individual doing?! That isn't a	CANADA, Sault Ste. Marie
8653	September07519	1	6	5	knows what the Bush Doctrine is. It's just that in Alaska,	CANADA, Red Deer
8654	Georgeann20674	0	6	5	says only within Europe..... are there disability auto parking a	Canada, Whitehorse
8655	Gena_msly	0	6	5	is status-free	Canada, Montreal
8656	Shalon58096	0	6	5	thinking inside the box because too many people are thinking	CANADA, Yellowknife
8657	Jackie41439	0	6	5	Hey my vegetarian friends, just a reminder that my food poop	CANADA, Toronto
8658	Alvardo_70143	0	6	5		
8659	Mandi_zanq	0	6	5	is actually nominated the best assisting actor or actress insid	CANADA, Barrie
8660	Adina_5026	0	6	5	sure that they underestimated me!	CANADA, Ottawa
8661	Nanci72398	0	6	5	It's really occur whenever your region has an being ove	CANADA, Grande Prairie
8662	Maurine_nreg	0	6	5	pretends to be effective. These people make believe you spen	CANADA, Montreal
8663	Kamala_jihs	0	6	5	afraid of Americans	CANADA, Edmonton

aztwi.com

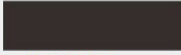
Qaynar mövzular

Aktiv mikrobloqqlar

Tanınmış mikrobloqqlar

Bütün mikrobloqqlar

Profilə baxış



Baku, Azerbaijan



İzləyici sayı:	11277
İzlədiklərinin sayı:	203
Tweetlər:	7540
Twitterdə neçə gündür:	1043
Ortalama gündəli tvit sayı:	7

İstifadəçinin reytingi



sivahya.bax

bu istifadəçini #aztwi cavdında tap: [İzləyici sayı](#) | [İzlədiklərinin sayı](#) | [Tweetlər](#) | [Qosulma tarixi](#)

[İzləyici sayı qrafiki](#) [Tvit sayı qrafiki](#) [Mention sayı qrafiki](#)



Conclusion

Hashtag hijacking does two things: one it renders a hashtag less useful for organizing and information sharing and secondly provides quantitative metrics to “prove” successes of the pro-government youth group that demonstrates support and allows them to perform loyalty to the higher-ups. Despite Twitter’s alleged ability to democratize the playing field, in Azerbaijan the resources and motivation to manipulate the platform render it less useful than some would hope.

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Internet freedom in Azerbaijan after the 7th Internet Governance Forum
The Expression Online Initiative. October, 2013

Chapter Five:

Plurality and diversity of online media, a level economic playing field and transparency of ownership

Azerbaijan does not offer its citizens a full plurality of public and private news sources—in print, on the air, and online. Nationwide radio and television broadcasting is the sole domain of the ruling establishment. While there is plurality in the print media, this again is limited largely to urban areas. As IREX’s Media Sustainability Index points out, an impressive number of over 5,000 television channels, radio stations, and newspapers does not translate into a pluralism of views⁶⁴.

While the number of Azerbaijan’s online news outlets has increased dramatically, they still continue to face significant pressure over their editorial content. The authorities have been using a so-called “stick-and-carrot” approach, when a recalcitrant beast is beaten into unwilling compliance or seduced into cooperation by an elusive dangling incentive. The use of this approach clearly seen from the controversial arrest of moderator. az news portal editor, Parviz Hashimli⁶⁵ which came shortly after 28 online journalists had been provided with free housing⁶⁶.

The rift between traditional and the Internet media continues to deepen with the Internet media “just-in-time” ability to its advantage, proving to be the most effective channel when covering breaking news like mass events, protest rallies, and other issues censored by traditional media.

What are these Internet news media like? How does their journalism compare with the traditional broadsheet papers that came to dominate journalism in the 20th century? Might these Internet news media suggest anything about the future of print? The Expression Online findings, along with an input from other media experts may help explain the current online news media landscape:

The **apa.az** (Azerbaijan’s Press Agency), which occupies top positions in Azerbaijan’s websites ratings⁶⁷, is something of a hybrid of domestic and international news coverage. Although apa.az cannot be considered an independent news agency, it sometimes still gives (although very brief) information about significant events in the country, such as the activities of political parties or public associations.

⁶⁴ IREX Media Sustainability Index, Azerbaijan, 2012. <http://www.irex.org/resource/azerbaijan-media-sustainability-index-msi>

⁶⁵ For more information, see XX chapter of this report

⁶⁶ Opposition journalists and freedom watchdogs in Azerbaijan criticized President IlhamAliyev for providing flats free of charge to reporters, arguing that he is seeking to ensure favorable coverage in the run-up to elections.

⁶⁷ See, inter alia, Alexa’s statistics of the top websites in Azerbaijan, as of October 12, 2013. The apa.az goes seventh, immediately after popular social networking websites <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/AZ>

The **contact.az**, independently owned, puts a higher emphasis on domestic news and offers more original copy and longer stories. Professional journalism standards and ethics are generally respected on this website.

News coverage of another popular⁶⁸ online news outlets, **trend.az**, **sia.az** and **1news.az** is closely coordinated with the president's office. This form of control is by no means coercive, as the owners are among the country's political elite and are the willing partners of the ruling regime. These websites serve the government's political goals, shaping public opinion by boosting, playing down, or ignoring certain issues, figures, or groups and instilling sentiments that benefit the ruling regime's political interests.

And only 70-80 % of the online news stories, indeed, were even original reporting. The vast majority of stories were wire copy—20-30%.

Over the past decade, Internet has become an increasingly important medium for **advertising**. The advertising agencies estimate that by 2015 the country's advertising budget will grow up to \$300-\$400 million, while the current budget is \$80 million⁶⁹. Mehman Aliyev, Director of Turan News Agency, says the advertising share for online media makes some 6 million AZN (7.653.061.22 USD), but advertising by and by-passes opposition and independent media. The distribution is strictly political⁷⁰.

Conclusion

The mass media are supposed to have an important political role – both in their purported capacity to influence political behavior (notably voting) and in their purported duty to hold power to account. The majority of Azerbaijan's news portals seem to exercise a high degree of self-censorship over the content of the news offered; thus serving the propaganda purposes of the ruling regime.



Brand new ICT room at one of Baku schools. Photo: www.president.az

⁶⁸ Ibid. As of October 12, 2013 trend.az goes 9th, sia.az 13th and 1news.az 14th.

⁶⁹ Ogilvy & Mather: Azerbaijan has potential for development of advertising market. <http://en.trend.az/capital/business/2132511.html>

⁷⁰ See, inter alia, IREX Media Sustainability Index 2012 for Azerbaijan, Objective 4: Business Management. http://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/u105/EE_MSI_2012_Azerbaijan.pdf

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Chapter Six:

Internet Users' Rights and their Violations

“Bloggers and human rights defenders who legitimately exercise their right to freedom of expression continue to be arbitrarily arrested, tortured and unjustly sentenced to imprisonment on the pretext of protecting national security or countering terrorism”.

Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights⁷¹

As host of this year's Internet Governance Forum, which took place in Baku in November, Azerbaijan's record on Internet freedom became a topic of increasing scrutiny, by actors within the country and by the international community.

Following the IGF, the most significant threat to free expression online was the targeting by authorities of individuals who used the Internet to voice critical opinions. For the most part, Azerbaijanis are technically able to do what they like online, but that does not mean there will not be repercussions. On the contrary, those who cross certain lines in their online postings – such as calling for protest, exposing corruption, or criticizing the president and his family – do so at significant risk.

While online media are largely free from government censorship, the authorities have expressed a desire to regulate it.⁷² Statements made by top government officials suggest that legal mechanisms of control may be forthcoming, including the licensing of Internet-based television programming.⁷³ These worrisome statements, which were mostly made with regard to online video and audio content, show that the state intends to interfere with the online broadcast news not covered by local television and radio, and views that differ from the official positions.⁷⁴

The authorities have a long record of monitoring, interfering with, and sometimes censoring online expression, occasionally blocking pro-opposition and critical websites and prosecuting persons for their online postings. The government was believed to be behind the sabotaging of the e-mail accounts and Facebook messages of critical journalists, human rights defenders and opposition political party activists.⁷⁵ A number of journalists and activists have been imprisoned in connection with critical articles they posted online.

By October 2013 and one year after the 7th IGF, seven journalists remained in detention or prison in connection with expressing critical opinions online.

⁷¹ Opening Remarks by Ms. Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the 19th session of the Human Rights Council, Panel Discussion on the Right to Freedom of Expression on the Internet. February 2012. <http://www.ohchr.org/RU/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=11884&LangID=E>

⁷² <http://bit.ly/aJTzXs>

⁷³ <http://www.today.az/view.php?id=77287>

⁷⁴ <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/1462.pdf>

⁷⁵ <http://bit.ly/WD5PI6>

In addition to harassing and arresting youth involved with organizing demonstrations, police questioned a number of online activists in connection with their Facebook activities. These cases signaled an alarming new strategy on the part of Azerbaijani authorities. In addition to government pressure, several state-controlled television stations also ran campaigns against social network sites, broadcasting interviews with psychologists and Internet experts arguing that online activities could have a detrimental effect on Azerbaijan's image and pose a threat to the country's security.

First national telecommunications satellite and violations of international commitments

Several months after the launch of the Azerbaijan's first national satellite, at least three independent media outlets reporting on Azerbaijan's current affairs, namely, RFE/RL, Meydan TV and Azerbaijan Saati ("Azerbaijan hour") reported several instances of jamming with its satellite broadcast into Azerbaijan.

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU), of which Azerbaijan is a member, prohibits jamming, as stipulated in Article 45 of the ITU's Constitution⁷⁶ and Article 15 of the ITU's Radio Regulations⁷⁷.

Thrown behind bars for illegal" appeals on Facebook

On 26 January 2013 well known blogger [Emin Milli](#) and other civil society activists were sentenced to the administrative detention and ordered to pay huge fines for organizing a peaceful protest via Facebook. As such, based on the Article 298.1⁷⁸ of the [Administrative Error Code](#), the court sentenced Emin Milli to 15 days of administrative detention and imposed 2,500 AZN(2.348 EUR) fine on youth activist [Turgut Gambar](#), for using Facebook to make calls for participation in the opposition protest held in the center of Baku on January 26, 2013. The court decision stated that the activists, who are accused of making calls on Facebook, placed "illegal" appeals on Facebook and invited citizens to take part in illegal protest and procession. The activists reiterated in their testimonies and at court hearings that they did nothing illegal by disseminating invitations on Facebook for participation in peaceful protest and that on the contrary, this right is given to them by the Constitution of Azerbaijan Republic.

On February 27th member of Popular Front Party's youth organization, Turkel Alisoy, was called to police office, where he was warned because of his Facebook post. Alisoy told the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS) that he was summoned due his [status update](#), in which he supported the Azerbaijani Students' Day of Boycott event created on Facebook. "Today at 8 o'clock in the morning police officers came to our house and took me to Khatai District Police Office #35, from where I was taken to Baku City Main Police Office. I was met by Aliaslan Agayev, head of the criminal-investigation department. They showed me printed screenshots of my post, and accused me of calling on students and other citizens to protest. In my written statement, I wrote that I just supported the event. They threatened to file criminal case against me if I continue to be that active and call for protest on Facebook. I was released at 3pm" said Alisoy.

Release of arrested online activists

The only relatively positive event that happened in this period was the release of Khayal TV journalists Vugar Gonagov and Zaur Guliyev on suspended sentence. The two journalists had been in detention for one year

⁷⁶ <http://www.itu.int/net/about/basic-texts/constitution/chaptervii.aspx>

⁷⁷ ITU Radio Regulations <http://www.itu.int/pub/R-REG-RR-2012>

⁷⁸ Violation of order established by legislation of organization and conducting of meetings, demonstrations, street processions and pickets

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from 13 March 2012 until 15 March 2013, on charges of editing and publishing a [video](#) on YouTube, which showed the then chief of Guba City Executive Power insulting the residents of Guba (northern city of Azerbaijan), and making calls for protest.

Current cases of detained or imprisoned journalists and bloggers, internet activists

Currently seven journalists, bloggers and activists are behind bars in connection with their online activities. They are Araz Guliyev, Nijat Aliyev, Faramaz Novruzoglu, Ilkin Rustemzadeh, Rashad Ramazanov, Hilal Mammadov and Parviz Hashimli. Overall, right now there are nine journalists, two bloggers and two human rights defenders are behind bars in connection with exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Nijat Aliyev

Editor-in-chief of www.azadxeber.net news website, Nijat Aliyev was arrested on 20 May 2012 in front of Killer menswear shop near the Memar Ajami metro station, and taken to Yasamal District Police Office #27. He was charged under Article 234.1 of the Criminal Code (illegal manufacture, purchase, possession, transportation, transfer or sale of drugs, and psychotropic substances). It is widely believed that Aliyev was targeted for criticizing the authorities in the run-up to the Eurovision Song Contest, including the government's high expenditures for the event and policies on LGBT issues.

On 26 January, Aliyev was additionally charged under Article 167.2.2.1 (import, sale and distribution of religious literature, religious items and other informational material of a religious nature with the aim of reproduction, sale and distribution without appropriate authorization), Article 281.2 (appealing for the violent seizure of authority, violent deduction of authority or violent change of constitutional grounds or infringement of territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as distribution of materials of such content), and Article 283.2.3 (incitement of national, racial or religious hostility, humiliation of national honor, as well as discrimination of citizens based on their national, racial or religious background committed publicly or with use of mass media). Aliyev is being held at the Kurdakhani investigative detention facility while his trial is ongoing at the Baku Court of Grave Crimes. He has reported being tortured in custody.

Araz Guliyev

Editor of xeber44.com news website Araz Guliyev was arrested on 8 September 2012 on hooliganism charges after he was accused of attempting to disrupt an international folklore festival held in the Masalli region, causing bodily harm to two residents and a policeman, and smashing the windows of a car. Although originally charged of hooliganism, on April 5th Guliyev was sentenced to eight years in prison on charges of illegal possession of fire arms (Article 228.1), violation of public order (Article 233), inciting national, racial, ethnic or religious hatred (Article 283.1), resisting a representative of the authority (Article 315.2) and insulting the national flag or emblem of the Azerbaijani Republic (Article 324)

Faramaz Novruzoglu

On 22 August 2012, freelance journalist Faramaz Novruzoglu (Allahverdiyev) was sentenced to four and a half years in jail under Criminal Code Article 220.2 (appealing for mass disorders and violence against citizens) and Article 318.1 (crossing protected borders of the Azerbaijani Republic without established documents or outside

of a border checkpoint). The Baku Court of Appeals upheld the ruling on 2 April. Novruzoglu was accused of posting calls for riots on Facebook ahead of the 11 March 2011 Great People's Day protest, and of crossing the border into Turkey and living there illegally from November 2010 to October 2011. Novruzoglu has denied the charges and believes he was targeted for articles about Azerbaijan's imports and exports, which were critical of the government. He remains in custody at Prison #1

Rashad Ramazanov

Blogger Rashad Ramazanov was detained on May 9th near the "20 January" metro station and taken to the Department for Combating Organized Crime. He was charged with drug possession after police claimed to have found nine grams of heroin on him. Ramazanov denies the allegation. On May 17th Ramazanov was sentenced to three months of pre-trial detention. Prior to his arrest, Ramazanov used his Facebook page to criticize the authorities and commented on issues related to freedom and justice. If convicted, he faces confiscation of property and up to 12 years in jail. Ramazanov is being held at the Kurdakhani investigative detention facility. He has reported being tortured in custody.

Hilal Mammadov

Hilal Mammadov was arrested on 21 June 2012 and is charged with illegal possession of drugs in large quantities (Article 234.4.3/Criminal Code), treason (Article 274/Criminal Code), and incitement to national, racial, social and religious hatred and hostility (Article 283/Criminal Code). Mammadov got very popular after the video "[Ti kto takoy, davay dosvidaniya!](#)" (*Who the hell are you? Why don't you get lost?*) he had posted on YouTube. The video drew attention of Russian NTV, who sent its crew to Azerbaijan to prepare reportage from the folklore festival and interview Hilal Mammadov. After this, Hilal Mammadov commented on his video, saying that with this sole video he made Azerbaijan more popular than the government did by spending lots of funds on Eurovision. Briefly after this comment Mammadov was arrested. He was sentenced to five years in jail on September 27.

Parviz Hashimli

Journalist of *Bizim Yol* newspaper, director of moderator.az website Parviz Hashimli was detained on September 17th by employees of the Ministry of National Security. On September 18th the journalist was handed down a two-month pretrial detention sentence by the Sabail District Court awaiting trial under two articles of the Azerbaijani Criminal Code: Article 206.3.2 (*smuggling of firearms on preliminary arrangement by an organized group*) and 228.2.1 (*illegal obtaining, storing, carrying firearms and their spare parts on preliminary arrangement by an organized group*).

Mikayil Talibov

After the amendment to the Criminal Code, which criminalized defamation on the internet, was passed on June 5th, the first person to be brought to account for his opinions posted on the internet was individual Mikayil Talibov.

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On July 30 he was sentenced to a one-year public labor for his “libelous” Facebook posts. Talibov was found guilty under Article 147.1 of the Criminal Code (Slander) over the “libelous” comments on the “Accessbank-Haqsizbank” (Accessbank-Unjust Bank) Facebook page which he had created to criticize the activities of the bank.

Ilkin Rustemzadeh

Azad Genclik (Free Youth) Organization member Ilkin Rustemzadeh is in detention on hooliganism charges connected with a [Harlem Shake](#) video filmed in Baku. Rustemzadeh was notably active on Facebook. He was the author of Facebook events created on the eve of January 12, 26 and March 10 demonstrations, which were joined by more than 10,000 people. He was repeatedly threatened for sending out invitations to these events on Facebook.



*Popular blogger and activist Ilkin Rustamzadeh was detained for making a video depicting the Harlem Shake in a public park in Baku. He remains in detention and is accused of committing a hooliganism. Journalist and human rights defender Mehman Huseynov will face up to five years in prison if he is convicted of ‘hooliganism’. International organizations believe the charge was fabricated to punish him for using the Eurovision Song Contest, held in Azerbaijan in May 2012, to highlight human rights concerns to the international media.
Photo: IRFS and screenshot from <http://www.youtube.com/user/HOSTEL19AZ>*

Chapter Seven:

Internet Content Filtering

The Arab Spring showcased the powerful combination of civil society activism and social media. Politically inspired and digitally empowered, Azerbaijani civil society staged its own Baku Spring in March and April 2011 calling for democratic reform and respect for human rights. As Azerbaijani youth activists coordinated peaceful protests online, the government ramped up surveillance. Protestors, citizen reporters and online organizers were the victims of violent crackdowns, imprisoned on trumped up charges, and subjected to blackmail and harassment. These same tactics were used when Baku hosted the hugely popular Eurovision Song Contest.

The government has a poor track record of human rights abuses. It has clumsily negotiated its conflicting priorities of modernizing the telecommunications infrastructure, while trying to control the information environment, online content and internet user behavior. Officially, the Azerbaijani internet is not restricted, but in 2011 websites belonging to opposition media and civil dissidents, such as Radio Azlaq and Azerbaijani service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFL/RE) have occasionally been blocked. The information environment is increasingly controlled, with foreign companies banned from broadcasting on national frequencies, such as BBC, Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Azadliq Radiosu). Azadliq Radiosufacing the issues with live online streaming of regular programs. Their streaming to Youtube (<http://www.youtube.com/user/AzadliqRadiosu>) become impossible exactly when they start the broadcast of some very hot topic that is usually unwanted by the authorities, such as corruption stories, pre-election discussions, etc. When the topic is not that “tough” the streaming is ok. Blocking finishes when the streaming (broadcast) time ends.

This is how Azerbaijan blocks a website

This case study is an edited version of the blog post ‘Imgur.com blocked in Azerbaijan?’, published on the Global Voices Advocacy website⁷⁹. The Global Voices Advocacy is a global network of bloggers and online activists dedicated to protecting freedom of expression and free access to information online.

In January, the hacker group Anonymous released a huge volume of documents leaked from Special State Protection Service of Azerbaijan⁸⁰. In total, there were 1.7 GB of documents released, but someone went through much of it and made the most interesting documents available on another website – Imgur.com, which is a popular image sharing site.

Interesting things happened next. All of a sudden, Imgur.com stopped working in Azerbaijan. Users in Azerbaijan could access direct links to photographs, but otherwise Imgur.com was not working. For a few weeks, Imgur.com had been inaccessible in Azerbaijan.

So imgur.com appears to be blocked by the government of Azerbaijan due to sensitive material it was hosting. It may be blocked for a legitimate reason, from the perspective of state security, but it demonstrates that the government is capable of blocking websites.

⁷⁹ See more at <https://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/2013/02/07/imgur-com-blocked-in-azerbaijan/>

⁸⁰ 1.7GB Documents leaked from Special State Protection Service of Azerbaijan <http://www.cyberwarnews.info/2013/01/19/1-7gb-documents-leaked-from-special-state-protection-service-of-azerbaijan/>

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There have also been reports of internet blackouts in remote regions outside of the capital. Following a 2011 protest in Guba, the internet was reportedly inaccessible for 15 hours a day, and slow speeds made access to Web 2.0 applications difficult. Protests again erupted in Guba a year later, triggered by the circulation of a YouTube video showing an official insulting the local community. Central government officials searched internet cafés in search of the individual who posted the video and those who made controversial comments appearing on social media sites in connection to the riot. As a result Vugar Gonagov (Khayal TV executive director), Zaur Guliyev (Khayal TV editor-in-chief) and the owner of MMM internet cafe are now behind bars.

While there are no restrictions on Web 2.0 applications such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, it is widely reported that the authorities target bloggers and civil society activists for expressing dissenting views online. The government has expanded its authority to police online content. In November 2010, it was announced that the government-controlled Press Council would start monitoring online news sources for their compliance with the rules of professional journalism.

Internet cafés are also monitored. Restrictions on adult content and social networking sites have been registered in internet cafes in Shirvan districts and Baku. Incidents of filtering have been reported in the autonomous exclave of Nakhchivan, where residents claimed they could not access the websites of the opposition newspapers Azadliq and Bizim Yol. Each episode of blocking lasted only a few days and have been set at the personal order of the head of the Supreme Mejlis of the Nakhchivan Autonomous republic (NAR), Vasif Talibov.

There are reports that Swedish telecommunications firm Telisonera, a major shareholder in Azercell, allowed the installation of “black boxes” on its equipment. These provided for real time monitoring of all communications across its networks – including voice, wireless internet, geo locational data and text messages.

The government continued to restrict online activity through surveillance, monitoring of independent blogs, and extralegal intimidation of users. Additionally, new regulations were implemented in 2013 that require all mobile phones to be registered according to their IMEI identification code.

Unregistered devices will be listed on a “black page” and mobile service providers will be required to limit service to all devices under this category. The registration process began on March 15, 2013, and a statement from the Deputy Minister of Communication and Information Technologies indicated that service would be affected for phones on the “black page” beginning May 1, 2013. (source: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2013/azerbaijan>)

There are no specific legal provisions requiring the use of filtering and blocking systems or software in libraries or Internet cafes. However, Azerbaijani secondary schools internet access is restricted by clause 2.4 of the “State Program for the Informatization of the Educational System in 2008–2012,” and the Ministerial Order “On Providing Internet Use in Academic Institutions.”

A “Council on Issues of Internet Use” was created under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. The council prepared model recommendations for Internet use in academic institutions and developed and introduced systems for classifying information unrelated to the education process in academic institutions, thereby isolating the network of academic institutions from dangerous content. Azerbaijan’s Education Network is composed of 18 million websites in 90 thematic groups.

A hotline service is operated by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies. The Ministry of Education’s Bureau for the Informatization of the Education System also operates a hotline to report illegal and dangerous content, and provide appropriate training sessions and monitoring.

Currently Internet access is mostly free from technical filtration by IP or URL, as same as there is no evidence of content replacement in all territory of Azerbaijan excluding Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Website filtration has been reported recently: <http://www.onetwotrip.com>, <http://www.smdt.az>, <http://www.kavkaz.tv> The situation in occupied territories of Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh region and 7 surrounding districts) still remain unclear due to absence of technical means to conduct technical testing of Internet traffic.

Conclusion

For the past few years, President Aliyev has been steadily declaring information and communication technologies (ICTs) a developmental priority. As this report demonstrates, President's rhetoric sharply contradicts reality. Unfortunately, as the importance of digital media and Internet has grown, so too has the desire of the Azerbaijani authorities to extend censorship and government repression practices from the real world into the online domain.

Prior to the introduction of this report, the Expression Online Initiative has provided a set of recommendations to the authorities for steps needed to improve Internet freedom in Azerbaijan. The Expression Online Initiative urges the authorities to take these recommendations seriously and use them as a starting point in pursuing a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder strategy on Internet freedom.

The Expression Online Initiative emphasizes that achieving full Internet freedom – and indeed broader democratic freedom in the country – will require serious political will by the authorities. Universal Internet access is a worthy goal, but means little in the absence of a climate conducive to freedom of expression both on- and offline. The Expression Online calls on the government of Azerbaijan to cease all forms of repression against those who exercise their right to freedom of expression, both online and offline, and to ensure Azerbaijani citizens have equal access to the internet at all times.


The international community should continue its pressure on President Ilham Aliyev to stand by his words and create a domestic environment that facilitates Internet access for Azerbaijani citizens and respects the rights of Internet users. Even with that being said, the mounting crackdown on fundamental freedoms in Azerbaijan makes it difficult to say how free the Internet will be in one, three, or five years from now.



The authorities deliberately slow down the Internet speed during important opposition events. In the photo: Azerbaijani bloggers and journalists broadcast live from a rally against Azerbaijan's disputed presidential election result. October, 2013. Photo: IRFS

In a perfect example of how the government is engaged in illegal surveillance, full HD surveillance camera was installed to spy on participants of a rally against Azerbaijan's disputed presidential election result. October, 2013. Photo: IRFS






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Cover photo: Azerbaijan's first telecommunications satellite,
the Azerspace/Africasat-1a was successfully launched into orbit
from French Guyana. February 7, 2013.

Source: www.arianespace.com