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His Excellency Ilham Aliyev,

On 26 December 2018, Azerbaijani authorities brought new criminal charges of "resisting a representative of the authorities with the use of violence dangerous to the representative's health and life" against Mehman Huseynov, a prisoner of conscience and outspoken Azerbaijani government-critic, just as his current jail term nears to an end. The prominent journalist and outspoken government-critic was accused of allegedly attacking an inspector at the detention centre where he is being held. He denies the charges. If convicted, Mehman Huseynov could face up to seven years in jail. Mehman Huseynov went on a hunger strike since 26 December to protest the new criminal charges and, according to his lawyer, is currently in a critical health condition.

Mehman Huseynov is currently serving a two-year prison sentence under trumped-up charges on a case of defamation of an entire police station. He was accused after he gave a statement in front of the courthouse in which he described torture and ill-treatment he had suffered at the hands of the police. He is a prisoner of conscience and should have never been prosecuted and convicted. With only three months left until his release, Amnesty International believes the new charges against Mehman Huseynov are politically motivated and have been brought in an effort to both further punish him for having expressed his critical views of the government, and to deter others from speaking up and seeking justice for police abuses - a persistent and well-documented problem in Azerbaijan.

I urge you to take all necessary steps to ensure that the new trumped-up charges against Mehman Huseynov are dropped and that he is immediately and unconditionally released, as he has been detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Yours sincerely,