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## **Azerbaijan: Analysis of Law on Media**

Azerbaijan adopted a new Law on Media in early 2022 which seeks to provide a comprehensive framework for media regulation. The Centre for Law and Democracy is today launching its Analysis of the new law. Despite some positive elements, the Media Law does not bring a forward-looking approach to regulating online media or modern broadcasting, fails to insulate regulatory powers from the government and imposes far too many constraints, including content restrictions, on different media sectors.

*“Azerbaijan has been achieving low scores in the area of media freedom for some time,”* said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *“Unfortunately, this new Media Law will neither improve those scores nor create a freer or more diverse environment for the media.”*

Some of the more serious problems with the Media Law are as follows:

- It is far too broad in scope, especially in its definition of online media, although it also takes a traditional, narrow approach to defining who is a journalist.
- It imposes a broad range of restrictions on the content media outlets may disseminate, most of which are either illegitimate entirely or overly broad and vague.
- It creates a new Audiovisual Council which is proclaimed as an independent body, but it then fails at a practical level to ensure its independence.
- It sets out numerous unnecessarily restrictive rules for all media outlets in areas such as logos, copyright, secret recording techniques, founders and foreign funding.
- It imposes overly broad licensing and other requirements on broadcasters and yet fails to recognise community broadcasting or use licensing to promote diversity.
- Print and online media have to go through a complex process to start up, and submit 18 different types of information, instead of benefitting from a simple registration system.
- Strict conditions are placed on the recognition of journalists including having higher education, working for a registered media and not having been convicted of a crime.
- It envisages only suspension and termination as sanctions, even for potentially very mild breaches of the rules.

We call on the Azerbaijani authorities to substantially revise the Media Law so as to bring it more fully into line with international standards.

Our Analysis is available [here](#).

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