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Anne Brasseur, President of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

2 April 2014

### **Statement of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum**

#### **on the arrest of Hasan Huseynli, Head of “Intelligent Citizen” Enlightenment Center Public Union, Azerbaijan**

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum protests strongly against the arrest of Hasan Huseynli, head of “Intelligent Citizen” Enlightenment Center Public Union based in Ganja city in Azerbaijan. He was arrested on 31 March 2014 on trumped up charges of hooliganism for allegedly stabbing someone with whom he had never come in contact. The police in Ganja have confirmed the charges. The investigation that is being carried out against Hasan Huseynli is completely unlawful and absurd, and does not warrant his detention.

Hasan Huseynli is an education promoter, social activist, and community leader, who has had a huge positive impact on hundreds of young Azerbaijanis, encouraging them to study abroad and contribute to Azerbaijan’s development with their knowledge and skills. He is a highly respected civil rights activist, and his organisation is highly regarded in Azerbaijan and abroad.

We consider Hasan Huseynli's detention to be part of a larger clampdown on civil society. This clampdown was started in November 2013 when legal proceedings were launched against Anar Mammadli, head of the Azerbaijani election watchdog, the Elections Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center, and Working Group 1 co-ordinator of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum in 2013.

We urge the government of Azerbaijan to immediately free Hasan Huseynli, and to drop all charges against him. The authorities must understand that every additional political prisoner in Azerbaijan undermines the country's image abroad and its position in the Council of Europe and in the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe as well as its relations with the European Union.

We urge the European Commission, the EU Delegation in Baku, and the European Parliament to condemn his arrest in the strongest terms, and to support the Civil Society Forum in putting pressure on Azerbaijan authorities for the immediate release of all political prisoners in Azerbaijan.

Yours faithfully,  
Steering Committee  
Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership