

[AZ] New Media Law Changes Principles of Media Regulation

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On 9 December 1999 the Azerbaijani Parliament adopted in the third hearing the new Mass Media Statute containing several changes to the structure of relations between media and government.

First, all news media of Azerbaijan shall now be registered with the Ministry of Justice and not any longer with the Ministry of Press and Information.

Second, the process of licensing has been altered. The new act stipulates the creation of a government agency, though without naming it, that shall control the process of broadcasting licensing. The agency will have the power to withdraw broadcasting licenses that it finds violate broadcasting regulations.

Third, new rules concerning the accreditation of journalists have been introduced. According to Article 50 of the Statute, accreditation can be withdrawn without a decision of the court if in the opinion of the accrediting offices accreditation rules are violated by either journalists or editorial staff, or if derogatory information, perverted news or false facts are published by journalists.

Finally, the Statute introduces the new right of government officials to bring lawsuits against journalists whose work, in their view, "insults the honor and dignity of the state and the Azerbaijani people" or is "contrary to the national interest".

The Statute shall enter into force within 70 days of the third hearing by a separate Decree of the President of Azerbaijan that brings into force any statute of the parliament.

