

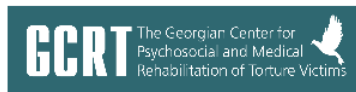


**HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
HOUSE**  
Tbilisi



## PROTECTION PROGRAM REPORT

*Support provided to exiled human rights defenders  
from Azerbaijan in Georgia*



Human Rights House Tbilisi (HRHT) is a membership based organization and unites five Georgian civil society organizations, working in different fields of Human Rights. Based in Tbilisi, it was registered in July, 2010 as a non-governmental organization with the support of Human Rights House Foundation. HRHT became a member of the network of Human Rights Houses in the same year. The Human Rights House Foundation defends, empowers and supports human rights defenders and their organizations. Currently, independent human rights organizations work together in 16 human rights houses in 11 countries. The member organizations of HRHT are: the Human Rights Center (HRDC), Article 42 of the Constitution, Georgian Center for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (GCRT), Sapari and Media Institute. In accordance to the concept of Human Rights House, in order to enhance co-operation and joint activities, to advocate for better protection of human rights, all member organizations of HRHT share physical space and work on the following directions: providing legal and psychological service, improvement of legislation, advocacy, human rights education and protection of human rights defenders, activist and journalists at risk.

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### **Disclaimer**

The document was prepared by the Human Rights House Tbilisi in partnership with its member organizations and with financial support of the Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF). The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the Human Rights House Tbilisi and do not necessarily reflect the views of the HRHF.

### **Our Donors**

We would like to express sincere thanks to donors and partners of Human Rights House Tbilisi. We would like to express special thanks to our strategic partner - Human Rights House foundation and our donors - Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Georgia and National Endowment for Democracy (NED) for supporting the implementation of the protection program for human rights defenders in Georgia.

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## Abstract

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The below report presents the activities carried out by the Human Rights House Tbilisi (HRHT) in 2014-2017, which aimed to protect the Azerbaijani human rights defenders sheltering in Georgia and to promote their civic integration in the country.

The protection program implemented by the HRHT enabled more than one hundred displaced civil or political activists, journalists, representatives of nongovernmental organizations and human rights defenders to receive support. In the frame of the protection program, it was possible to significantly reduce the risks the beneficiaries were placed in and to offer new opportunities to them. The protection program was implemented with active support of and cooperation with the Human Rights House Foundation. In addition to that, the HRHF, in partnership with the HRHT and two more houses (Chernigov Human Rights Educational House (Ukraine), Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House) elaborated the guidelines and main principles of the protection program, based on which the abovementioned Houses operate.

The report reviews cases of Azerbaijani refugees – the problems they face upon arrival in Georgia and the assistance they received from the HRHT. The Human Rights House Tbilisi actively continues to defend the rights of the Azerbaijani refugees in Georgia and advocates their interests in Georgia and abroad.

During the implementation of the protection program, HRHT received financial support from the Human Rights House Foundation, National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Georgia.

## State of Human Rights in Azerbaijan

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The defense of human rights is one of the significant challenges in Azerbaijan. Many influential international organizations report that there are systemic challenges in the country and that the Azerbaijani authority makes politically motivated decisions, which come in conflict with fundamental human rights and freedoms.

The crackdown on human rights defenders, independent journalists or activists has become particularly intensive in the past years. In addition to that, the amended legislation in 2009 restricted the freedom of expression, right to peaceful assembly and manifestation<sup>1</sup>.

On September 26, 2016, the Azerbaijani government conducted a constitutional referendum. The constitutional amendments<sup>2</sup> resulted into the concentration of political power, which finally ended up with the restriction of the activities of political opponents, different independent activists or human rights defenders. By now, many politicians, journalists, civil activists, human rights defenders or their relatives are placed in Azerbaijani prisons.

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights House Foundation, *Freedom Now “Breaking Point in Azerbaijan”*, 2015 available at: <https://humanrightshouse.org/noop-media/documents/20949.pdf> (last seen 28.09.2018}

<sup>2</sup> Freedom House, „*Azerbaijan: Constitutional Referendum Gives Aliyev Unchecked Power*” 27,09, 2016 available: <https://freedomhouse.org/article/azerbaijan-constitutional-referendum-gives-aliyev-unchecked-power> [last seen 28.09.2018}

In accordance to the Democracy Index of the Economist<sup>3</sup>, the Democracy Index in Azerbaijan has been worsening every year since 2012. In 2016, Azerbaijan received the lowest rating – 2.65 points on the 10-point scale of the index; according to the Economist it means that there is an authoritarian regime ruling the country.

The reports of international organizations about the state of human rights and weak evidence against the Azerbaijani civil activists, who criticized the authority and were placed in prison, verify the abovementioned evaluations about the situation in Azerbaijan. Famous international organizations like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and others evaluate the state of human rights in Azerbaijan as grave.

In accordance to the 2016 report of the Human Rights Watch<sup>4</sup>, Azerbaijani authority continues persecution of oppositionist human rights organizations and independent media. Particular attention is paid to the persecution of independent journalists and closing down of media institutions. The report states that journalists became subjects of oppression and intimidation in order to silence them, and that all key media sources remain under the control of the government.

In accordance to the report, regulations restricting the nongovernmental organizations<sup>5</sup> and punishment mechanisms make financing and operation of independent nongovernmental organizations almost impossible. “Since 2014, the Azerbaijani prosecutor’s office suspended financial support of dozens of foreign donors for local NGOs. The bank accounts of human rights organizations and NGOs working on the accountability of the government were closed. These groups stopped working at all or continued activities in exile,” reads the report of the Human Rights Watch.

In its 2016-2017 report, Amnesty International<sup>6</sup> declared the activists arrested in Azerbaijan for the criticism of the authority as “prisoners of conscience.” According to their evaluation, alongside the arbitrary detention of opponents, information about the facts of their torture and ill-treatment was disseminated, which were not adequately investigated and responded to.

According to the report, the international human rights monitors were many times refused to enter the territory of Azerbaijan<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, local human rights defenders reported that in 2016-2017 more than one hundred individuals were arrested under politically motivated charges in Azerbaijan.

Human Rights House Baku (HRHB), which was registered as an international branch of the Human Rights House Foundation, and actively worked on the protection of human rights, had to stop their activities in 2011 based on the decree of the Government of Azerbaijan. Since then, many of HRHB employees were arrested; some of them are in exile. Regardless of the abovementioned difficulties, the Human Rights

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<sup>3</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index, 2016, available at <https://infographics.economist.com/2017/DemocracyIndex/> [last seen 28.09.2018]

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch, *country report*, 2016 available at <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/azerbaijan> [last seen 28.09.2018]

<sup>5</sup> Civic Freedom Monitor, *country report, 2017*, available at <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/azerbaijan.html> [last seen 28.09.2018]

<sup>6</sup> Amnesty International, *Azerbaijan 2016-2017*, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/azerbaijan/report-azerbaijan/> [last seen] 28.09.2018]

<sup>7</sup> Amnesty International, *Azerbaijan 2016-2017*, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/azerbaijan/report-azerbaijan/> [last seen 28.09.2018]

House Foundation, on September 15, 2017, announced a call of application for the NGOs and selected three Azerbaijani organizations<sup>8</sup>, which will work on the implementation of the HRHF goals and objectives in Azerbaijan.

Together with the Human Rights House Tbilisi, or on international level – with the UN, Council of Europe, OSCE and EU, the Human Rights House Foundation actively advocates<sup>9</sup> the interests of the citizens victimized by the persecution from the side of the government in different countries including Georgia.

Considering the challenges in the field of human rights in Azerbaijan, the Human Rights House Tbilisi, in cooperation with the Human Rights Foundation, commenced the program in 2014, which provided Azerbaijani activists with important legal, humanitarian, medical or other assistance.

### *Protection program for the human rights defenders and activists displaced from Azerbaijan*

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Since 2014, oppression on free media, nongovernmental organizations, opposition politicians, human rights defenders and other activists has significantly increased from the side of the Azerbaijani authority that took the country far away from the democratic standards and halted its development. According to the reports of international organizations<sup>10</sup>, as a result of the repressive policy of the Government of Azerbaijan, independent and free activities in the country became almost impossible.

The analysis of the cases mentioned in the aforesaid reports, as well as cases processed by the HRHT, showed that besides direct opponents of the state regime, the relatives of the activists also became subjects of oppression from the government. Consequently, the family members of the opponents of the government often had to flee from the country also and be sheltered abroad to avoid persecution and arbitrary detentions.

The HRHT has permanent contact and good cooperation with Azerbaijani human rights organizations. At the same time, the territorial distance between the countries and liberal visa policy in Georgia (citizens of Azerbaijan can stay in Georgia up to 12 months without a visa) made Georgia one of the key destination countries for the Azerbaijani refugees.

In the frame of the protection program of the Human Rights House, from September 2014 to December 2017, seven projects were implemented where 126 citizens of Azerbaijan were involved. The projects aimed to assist those civil activists, journalists, human rights defenders or other refugees from Azerbaijan, who were under the threat of politically motivated imprisonment or other forms of repression. The program beneficiaries are divided into two main categories:

**Group I (beneficiaries)** – activists, journalists or human rights defenders, who, because of their activities, were victims of persecution or oppression from the side of the Azerbaijani government;

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<sup>8</sup> New Members for Human Rights House Azerbaijan, available at: <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/22933.html> [last seen 28.09.2018]

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Houses Foundation and Human Rights Houses, *annual report* 2016 available at: <http://humanrightshouse.org/noop-media/documents/22593.pdf> [Last seen 28.09.2018]

<sup>10</sup> See the 2016-2017 Annual Reports of the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International

**Group II (family members of the beneficiaries)** – spouses/partners of beneficiaries, children of any age, parents. In some cases, also related person, who due to the activities of the human rights defender/activist, needs resettlement/assistance.

Having studied the needs of each group, it was determined that after resettlement in Georgia they need different types of services. The protection program of the HRHT assists the beneficiaries from 3 up to 6 months' period. At the same time, often, different projects were simultaneously implemented to meet the different needs of the beneficiaries.

The HRHT provided the Azerbaijani citizens with the following components of assistance:

1. Legal aid;
2. Humanitarian assistance (financial assistance and accommodation);
3. Medical and psycho-social assistance;
4. Promotion of civic integration.

After the service provided by the HRHT, part of the beneficiaries left Georgia and moved to a third country. Another part still lives in Georgia; a small part returned to Azerbaijan having solved their problems or/and having stopped their activities in the country.

Chart 1 clearly demonstrates the assistance provided by the HRHT for the Azerbaijani refugees in Georgia.

According to the statistical data, provision of a beneficiary with an accommodation (97), with financial (55) and medical assistance (77) are those components of the program which were applied to most beneficiaries. A significant part of the beneficiaries applied for legal aid (40) and for services promoting their integration, like language courses (36).

In 2014-2017, 59 families (126 individuals) received the service at the Human Rights House Tbilisi.

Chart 1

Service provided in the frame of the protection program																	
Type of service	09. 2014				2015				2016				2017				Subtotal
	woman	man	child	total	woman	man	child	total	woman	man	child	total	woman	man	child	total	
Legal aid	5	7	5	17	4	8	1	13	0	1	0	1	5	4	0	9	40
Medical aid	4	3	4	11	7	9	8	24	4	7	3	14	9	13	6	28	77
Psychological aid	4	5	1	10	4	8	3	15	4	5	2	11	5	3	1	9	45
Financial aid	2	2	1	5	4	10	1	15	4	7	0	11	9	15	0	24	55
Accommodation	4	5	5	14	4	11	7	22	7	9	8	24	12	16	9	37	97
Foreign language course	2	2	2	6	2	4	9	15	2	4	2	8	3	4	0	7	36
<b>Total of beneficiaries</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Number of families <sup>11</sup></b>	<b>9 families - 22 beneficiaries</b>				<b>21 families - 42 beneficiaries</b>				<b>9 families - 24 beneficiaries</b>				<b>20 families - 38 beneficiaries</b>				<b>59 families 126 Beneficiaries</b>

<sup>11</sup> In cases when support was provided to one individual only (without accompanied persons) – 1 person is also considered as 1 family.

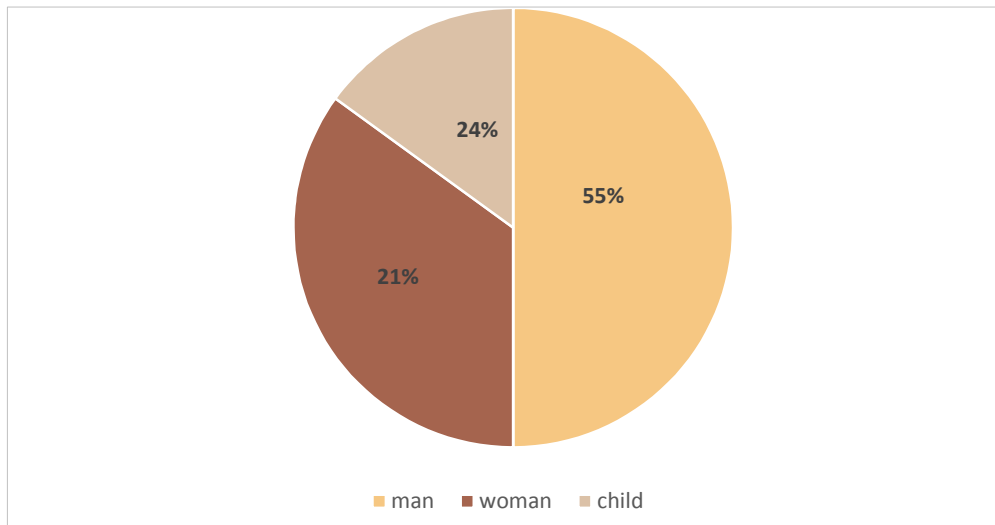


## Legal aid

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Human Rights House Tbilisi in partnership with its member organizations offers free legal aid and consultations to the activists and their family members from Azerbaijan. In 2014-2017, 40 citizens of Azerbaijan received free legal aid on different issues.

**Chart 2**



During the legal aid, the most urgent issue was the residence permission in Georgia and getting a Georgian visa<sup>12</sup>. However, since 2017, alleged facts of persecution of Azerbaijani citizens in Georgia became a pressing issue. It resulted from the alleged abduction of Afgan Mukhtarli, one of the beneficiaries of the protection program, from Georgia. Afgan Mukhtarli disappeared from the Tbilisi city center and was later found in detention in Azerbaijan. According to Mukhtarli's statement, strangers forcibly put him in a car and took him to an unidentified direction with a sack over his head. HRHT member organization Article 42 of the Constitution defends the interests of Afgan Mukhtarli and his family in Georgia; the application was sent to the European Court of Human Rights<sup>13</sup>.

Since 2017, particularly after Afgan Mukhtarli's alleged abduction, the program beneficiaries started complaining about their persecution in Georgia. In private talks, Azerbaijani citizens, sheltering in Georgia, state that they do not feel secure in Georgia as they believe they are under surveillance and

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<sup>12</sup> Before 2015, Azerbaijani citizens could stay in Georgia without visa only during 90 days that was later changed into 360 days (one year) limit.

<sup>13</sup> See more details about Afgan Mukhtarli's case in the report prepared by the HRHT: The Case of Afgan Mukhtarli, Facts and Evaluation, available at: <https://humanrightshouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/The-Case-of-Afgan-Mukhtarli.pdf> [last seen 28.09.2018]

oppression based on the orders of the Azerbaijani authority. Because of this reason, one part of the beneficiaries had to leave Georgia<sup>14</sup>.

In 2017, in the frame of the protection program, 7 beneficiaries received legal assistance over the cases of alleged surveillance. However, no final decisions have been made so far and there are questions being asked about effective investigation procedures by investigative bodies of Georgia.

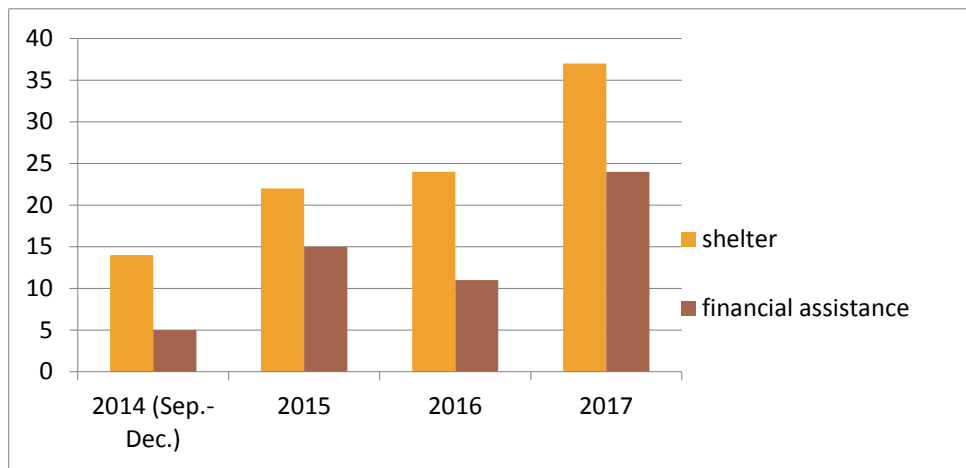
### *Humanitarian assistance*

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Humanitarian assistance was one of the significant components of the HRHT protection program, which includes provision of the beneficiaries with accommodation and essential financial assistance during 3 months (see Chart 3).

In the frame of the program, considering the needs of the beneficiaries, not only refugees from Azerbaijan but also their family members received accommodations in Georgia. The beneficiaries can receive accommodation for 3 months and financial assistance is allocated for them to cover everyday expenses during 3 months.

**Chart 3**



Humanitarian assistance is provided upon the individual application of the beneficiaries and after studying their individual needs. It is noteworthy that most beneficiaries received accommodation and financial assistance in 2017. With the passing years, the number of Azerbaijani activists and human rights defenders fleeing to Georgia has increased. Particularly interesting is the fact that the situation changed in 2017 (see the chapter below: legal aid) and often, Georgia was not considered to be a safe

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<sup>14</sup> Azerbaijani Human Rights Defenders and activists in Georgia, available at: <https://humanrightshouse.org/articles/azerbaijani-human-rights-defenders-and-activists-in-georgia/> [last seen 28.09.2018]

country for Azerbaijani refugees but because of geographical location and Democracy Index, Georgia remained the principal destination country for Azerbaijani refugees.

In 2014-2017, 77% (97 individuals) of beneficiaries received the services and temporary accommodation from the Human Rights House Tbilisi; 43% (55 individuals) received financial assistance.

These components of the program were strategically important for the adequate defense of the refugees' rights and their rehabilitation. Without providing the beneficiaries with the accommodation and financial assistance, the HRHT would not have been able to provide the beneficiaries with different assistance programs that significantly promoted not only the defense of their rights but their social integration and the creation of basic living conditions for them.

Human Rights House Tbilisi takes particular measures to empower refugees, who plan to stay longer, and promote their integration, so that they could continue their professional activities and take care of themselves and their families. These people enter universities, learn Georgian language and more.

### *Psychological and medical assistance*

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After the persecution and repressions of its citizens from the side of the Azerbaijani authority, the refugees particularly need medical and psychological assistance.

In this view, the member organization of the Human Rights House Tbilisi, the Georgian Center for the Psycho-Social Rehabilitation of Torture Victims created a special medical treatment and rehabilitation program, in the frame of which, throughout 2014-2017, the GCRT assisted 84 refugees from Azerbaijan that made up 67% of the total number of received beneficiaries (see chart 4).

**Chart 4**

Gender	age: 0-15	age:16-60	age: 60+
Male	11	37	0
Female	10	26	2
Total	21	61	2

According to the provided data, 47% of beneficiaries were victims of repression, the other 53% where either their family members or relatives, who were also subjected to psychological oppression, intimidation and insulting.

The length of the medical treatment significantly differed in each case. Patients applied to the GCRT for permanent service as well as for one-month rehabilitation process. 26 patients took one-month rehabilitation course; 17 patients took the rehabilitation course for up to 6 months in length; 22 patients

needed the rehabilitation course for more than 6 months in length. These data do not include single or sporadic medical services/consultations.

In the frame of the program, beneficiaries received all necessary medical examinations: clinical, laboratory and instrumental examinations, including computer and magnetic-resonance tomography, coronarography, elastography, trepan-biopsy, etc.

After the diagnosis and medical treatment course were determined, medications were prescribed for the beneficiaries and their treatment process was monitored; control examinations and consultations were provided. In some cases, the program financed minor surgical operations as well.

Upon the request of the beneficiaries, the GCRT sent documents about the patients' health conditions and rehabilitation process to medical clinics abroad (example: Norway, Germany).

It is noteworthy that a social worker was working with all beneficiaries in 2014-2017, who issued a total of 271 consultations to them. Besides the health problems, 22 beneficiaries were seen by a psychologist and received 76 consultations; 30 beneficiaries received 56 consultations to a psychiatrist.

The beneficiaries undertook psycho-diagnostic examination, psychological consultations and psychotherapy sessions in the process of rehabilitation. The main directions of the work and achievements are:

- ✓ stabilization;
- ✓ regulation of emotions;
- ✓ empowerment of the adaptation mechanisms;
- ✓ development of communication skills;
- ✓ looking for the resources and empowerment;
- ✓ elaboration of future plans;
- ✓ regulation of inter-personal relations.

Almost all beneficiaries worried about the separation from their relatives, colleagues and native environment. The individuals and families, who were subjected to surveillance and persecution, had a particular feeling, and fear, of threat and lack of protection. There were cases of physical harassment and injuries.

The medical service provided by the GCRT significantly assisted the improvement of psychological and physical conditions and rehabilitation of the Azerbaijani refugees. After the medical treatment process, the psycho-social conditions of the majority of beneficiaries had improved.

## Support in the civic integration

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In the course of the implementation of the protection program of the Human Rights House Tbilisi, it was determined that besides humanitarian, legal or medical assistance, the refugees needed capacity building in different directions, considering their new environment and new opportunities.

In order to improve the conditions of the refugees and to support their activities, HRHT implemented various activities, which promoted the reduction of risks of the Azerbaijani citizens in exile and their long-term professional development. Nevertheless, coping with different barriers (language barrier, employment and more) is still a serious challenge for refugees.

Among the activities implemented for the civic integration and professional capacity building, it is important to note the following activities:

- Georgian and English language courses;
- trainings: human rights and human rights defense mechanisms; the Georgian laws necessary for the aliens living in Georgia; life and work in Georgia; the law about migration, and more;
- trainings: writing project proposals, project management and development of entrepreneurship skills;
- security and defense issues – trainings on physical and digital security;
- employment of journalists and bloggers;
- paid internship and more.

The presented directions were elaborated upon the consideration of the interests and needs of the refugees. It is important that the refugees had possibility to continue their activities and free development in the frame of the program.

In this light, it is particularly effective to engage different individuals in the projects for journalists and bloggers. That was a unique project as it enabled the continuation of activities in foreign countries. Since 2015, Azerbaijani activists actively prepare articles, video and photo reportages about the problems, needs, social life and human rights of the Azerbaijani minorities living in Georgia. As of now, with the support of the HRHT, Azerbaijani journalists prepared 98 articles, which were published by various Georgian and English language media sources<sup>15</sup>.

In 2017, the HRHT launched a paid internship program, which enabled the beneficiaries to be employed during 3 months in the HRHT member or partner organizations in Georgia.

The programs assisted the Azerbaijani refugees in the integration and enhancement of their civic engagement. Beneficiaries believe these projects of the HRHT are very important for them, because they assisted Azerbaijani activists and HRDs to feel themselves parts of Georgian civil society and be able to improve their professional skills.

The HRHT continues the support of activists from Azerbaijan together with the defense of the refugees' rights that aims to build their skills and opportunities.

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<sup>15</sup> The Marneuli Mosque Dispute, *Georgia Today*, 23 October 2017, available at <http://georgiatoday.ge/news/7937/The-Marneuli-Mosque-Dispute?868> [last seen 28.09.2018]

## Observation missions

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Since 2015, HRHT has been monitoring the trials in Azerbaijan over the cases of Azerbaijani activists, human rights defenders and journalists. Considering the political influence over the judiciary system, the monitoring aimed to identify alleged facts of violation of the HRDs' right to fair trial and to use all instruments to effectively react to these facts.

The lawyers of the HRHT member organizations – Article 42 of the Constitution and Human Rights Center monitored the trials against journalists and HRDs in Azerbaijan. The lawyers provided the HRHT and the Human Rights House Foundation with the information about the conducted court proceedings in the form of reports or OSCE trial monitoring questionnaires.

Since 2015, the HRHT monitored 68 trials over the cases of 12 civil activists, journalists and HRDs in Azerbaijan. After each process, the journalists of the monitoring mission or HRHF prepare articles for online media<sup>16</sup>. Besides that, the trial protocols, reports and filled-out questionnaires are sent to the HRHF, which uses all information for the preparation of the final report<sup>17</sup>.

The trial monitoring revealed that besides procedural violations, in some cases, the Azerbaijani court passed ungrounded judgments. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch declared that many of the people arrested in Azerbaijan for the past years to be political prisoners<sup>23</sup>. Different procedural violations are systemic problems in the course of court hearings<sup>18</sup>.

Formally, the court hearings in Azerbaijan are mostly public and any observer can attend trials, but often the hearings are held in very small courtrooms and the judge does not allow all interested people to attend the trials. Often, observers from international organizations and foreign human rights defenders cannot observe the trials because of this reason. In reality, the small courtrooms are occupied by state servants or the rooms are empty. Similar facts were observed when the court was processing the cases of the Azerbaijani human rights activists – Leyla Yunus, Arif Yunus and investigative journalist Khadija Ismaylova. In some cases, representatives of different embassies were allowed to attend the trials but without interpreters.

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<sup>16</sup> *Magazine Liberali, Prolonged appellation on Khadija Ismaylova's case, 2015.* available at: <http://liberali.ge/articles/view/19025/khadija-ismailovas-gakhangrdzlivebuli-apelatsia> [last seen 28.09.2018]

<sup>23</sup> *Human Rights House Tbilisi, Observer's Narrative about the Trial of Intigam Aliyev and Trial of Rasul Jafarov in Azerbaijan, 2014-2016* available <http://humanrightshouse.org/noop/file.php?id=21794> [last seen 28.09.2018]

<sup>17</sup> the reports are available at <https://humanrightshouse.org/who-we-are/reports-and-finances/#Annualreports> [last seen 28.09.2018]

<sup>18</sup> Human Rights House Tbilisi, *about the process of the victim Rasul Jafarov, 2015.* available: <http://humanrights.ge/index.php?a=main&pid=18167&lang=geo> [last seen 28.09.2018]

## Summary

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Since 2014, the issue of human rights defense became particularly urgent in Azerbaijan, as the government intensified oppression on the opponents and independent activists. This was proven by the number of reports prepared by international or local human rights organizations.

The protection program implemented by the Human Rights House Tbilisi enabled 126 refugees in 2014-2017 to receive accommodation together with qualified and complex support in Georgia.

The HRHT beneficiaries were civil activists, journalists, NGO representatives, HRDs, their family members and relatives displaced from Azerbaijan, who were under significant threat from the side of the Azerbaijani authority on political grounds.

In the frame of the program, the refugees and their family members could receive legal, humanitarian, medical or other assistance. Considering the individual needs of the beneficiaries, different programs were implemented to promote their civic integration that enabled the Azerbaijani refugees to improve their professional skills in different fields and to make their integration into Georgian society easier. The project lawyers, in the frame of the HRHT protection program, monitored trials in Azerbaijan, whose results were reflected in respective reports.

The HRHT actively cooperates with the international human rights networks, including Human Rights House Foundation and uses all possible legal, political and advocacy instruments to defend the rights of the Azerbaijani citizens.

It is important to continue the protection program of the Human Rights House Tbilisi for the Azerbaijani people, because the number of applicants has increased in 2017-2018. There are still challenges in the defense of human rights in Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani refugees still need to be sheltered in Georgia for their safety.