Freedom of expression in Azerbaijan was the central theme of a television production training exercise held in Baku, between 15-24 September 2010, and co-organised by the Media Diversity Institute (MDI). The trainees, TV reporters from government-controlled and independent stations across the country, had the task of producing a television talk show including filmed reports related this topic. After two days of training, the group filmed interviews with key witnesses on access to information and the use by journalists of anonymous or unidentified sources, a key area of journalistic ethics. Then panellists came together in a studio at the Azeri Media Centre, with members of the public, to discuss both topics in a recording for television. The programme was broadcast on Channel-13 TV (www.kanal13.tv) and Objective TV (www.obyektiv.tv).
TV Talk show on Freedom of Expression produced by MDI Azeri trainees

According to the trainees, the training was of great use though they also say journalistic freedom has diminished. One said: “Freedom of expression doesn’t work in Azerbaijan, it’s normal.” The television production project was supported by the British government and is part of joint 2-year programme, a collaboration between MDI, Article 19 and Yeni Nasil (Union of Journalists of Azerbaijan). The training course coincided with a mission to Azerbaijan by 12 freedom of expression organisations, including the Open Society Institute, the International Federation of Journalists, the Committee for the Protection of Journalists, the Media Diversity Institute, and Article 19, to make recommendations for improvements to journalistic and public rights to information ahead of the country’s parliamentary elections.