



PRESS RELEASE
November 27, 2010

AZAD FIKIR UNIVERSITETI WINS INTERNET FREEDOM AWARD

We are pleased to announce the winner of the first annual *USOSCE Ambassadorial Award for Freedom of Expression over the Internet: Azad Fikir Universiteti* (Free Thought University) in Baku, Azerbaijan.

In keeping with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's focus on freedom of expression over the Internet, the U.S. Mission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (USOSCE) recognizes the accomplishments of an individual or NGO who has made significant, sustained and innovative use of the Internet, especially new media, to promote the OSCE's human dimension principles such as democratic reforms, civil society, independent media, human rights or the rule of law.

The U.S. Representative to the OSCE, Ambassador Ian Kelly, presented the award to Vugar Salamli, a representative of Azad Fikir Universiteti, on November 27 during the Astana Portion of the Review Conference held in advance of the OSCE Summit in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Azad Fikir Universiteti was created by *O! Azerbaijani Youth Movement*, a group of young activists. (Two of their leaders, the bloggers Adnan Hajizade and Emin Milli, were recently released from jail.) *O!* offers interested parties a space for free speech and debate. This "university" exists as both a physical space, where twice-weekly lectures and debates are held, and as a virtual space (www.azadfikir.org), where videos, podcasts, blogs and forums are available to continue the discussions and to spur debate about democratization, human rights and media freedom, among other topics.

For additional information about the U.S. Mission to the OSCE, please visit our website:
<http://osce.usmission.gov>.

For further information about the *USOSCE Ambassadorial Award for Freedom of Expression over the Internet*, Azad Fikir Universiteti, and the award presentation, please contact:

Steve Labensky at LabenskySJ@state.gov or (+43) 664 322 9879

or

Veronika Sperl at SperlVX@state.gov or (+43) 664 838 4334



L to R, pictured on November 27, 2010, at the presentation of the inaugural USOSCE Ambassadorial Award for Freedom of Expression over the Internet: Permanent Representative of the United States to the OSCE, Ambassador Ian Kelly, Vugar Salamli of the Azerbaijan-based Azad Fikir Universiteti (Free Thought University), the U.S. Helsinki Commission Senior State Department Advisor, Ambassador Cynthia Efrid, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Thomas O. Melia. (USOSCE/Colin Peters)