

Academic Freedom and University

written by İlkin Hüseynli İlkin Hüseynli

The final version of this article has been published in English as a book chapter in *La liberté académique: principes, enjeux et menaces* by Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles in April, 2021. You can read the chapter titled *Academic Freedom and University: The Case of Azerbaijan* [here](#) for free.

I argue that Azerbaijani universities are a façade masking an ulterior motive. I examine the difficult relationship between authoritarian power and the university in Azerbaijan through the study of coercive policies put in place by university administrators preventing free thought and hampering the freedom of academics. My central thesis is that the university is a place where researchers should be able to teach and conduct their research freely, without any hindrance from their administrators. However, in authoritarian countries, such as Azerbaijan, academic freedom suffers from regular interference and restrictions on the part of those administrators who, arguably due to the nature of the regime, assume that academics are not supposed to criticize the society, politics or universities in which they work. These administrators, who are often academics themselves, mistakenly believe that university priorities should be at the service of the regime at the expense of knowledge. I submit that the rigid discipline of Azerbaijani universities and the unfree relationship between high-ranking administrators and scholars – a relationship based on the domination of the former over the latter – do not only stymie academic discussions and development, but also squelch the liberty and creativity of scholars.