

# **AZERBAIJAN: Azerbaijan establishes new penalties for religious extremism**

Caucasian Knot (28.10.2016) – <http://bit.ly/2e1r0zb> – The National Assembly of Azerbaijan has introduced the amendments to the Criminal Code of the country, establishing new types of responsibility for religious extremism and violation of the Law “On freedom of religion”.

The “Caucasian Knot” has reported that in September, the President of Azerbaijan proposed to toughen the penalty for anti-state crimes. In particular, the Parliament was offered to complement the Criminal Code with new Article 278.2. It provides penalties for actions aimed at violent change of the constitutional order, seizure of power, as well as violation of the territorial integrity of the country on the grounds of religious hatred, radicalism, and fanaticism. According to the draft law, such acts entail a penalty of 15-20 years of imprisonment or life imprisonment.

The amendments to the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan were adopted by the Parliament at plenary session of October 28.

According to Ali Guseinli, the chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Policy and State Building, the innovations are associated with the increase in concern in the community about the threat of religious extremism.

In his turn, while commenting on the amendments to the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan, Elshan Gasanov, the chief of the Centre for Monitoring Political Prisoners, has expressed concern that the innovations could be used to persecute differently-minded believers.