



**PRESS RELEASE**  
(for immediate release)

**As Eurovision Song Contest approaches,  
concerns about hidden cameras in Azerbaijan hotel rooms**

**London, 16 May 2012** – Business & Human Rights Resource Centre sought responses from seven companies that operate leading hotels in Baku, Azerbaijan, about [reports that hidden cameras have repeatedly been placed in hotel rooms in the country to record people having sex in order to blackmail them](#).

Victims have included journalists and critics of the government. Last year, for example, two opposition journalists were secretly filmed in a hotel room having sex; this was later broadcast on a television channel owned by a cousin of President Aliyev.

One victim said that visitors to Azerbaijan for the Eurovision Song Contest (finals 26 May 2012) should be aware that cameras are sometimes planted in hotel rooms. The Azerbaijani organization Free Youth (Azad Gənclik Təşkilatı) issued a statement in March 2012 warning tourists visiting the country not to have sex under any circumstances, stating that hidden cameras are installed on the premises of all hotels.

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre asked each hotel to respond to these human rights concerns, and to indicate what it is doing to prevent such abuses from taking place on their premises in Azerbaijan.

**Six companies responded:** Excelsior Hotel Baku, Hilton, Hyatt, Kempinski, Radisson (Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group), and Ramada Hotel Baku (Wyndham Hotel Group).

Sheraton Hotels (Starwood Hotels) has so far failed to send a response.

[All the responses can be accessed here](#). If Sheraton Hotels does respond, the response will be added to that page.

*“We are disappointed that Sheraton has to date failed to respond about this serious human rights issue – we hope that it will do so now”,* said Marta Kasztelan, Researcher at Business & Human Rights Resource Centre.

Christopher Avery, Director of Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, commented: *“We hope that all hotels in Azerbaijan will resist any attempt to plant cameras in their rooms – a violation of the right to privacy, and in some cases also an attempt to deter critics of the government from exercising their right to freedom of expression. If there are further reports of hidden cameras, we will draw this to global attention, alerting journalists, investors, tourist agencies, and the United Nations Working Group on business & human rights.”*

Human rights groups, including Human Rights Watch, have raised [a broad range of concerns about human rights violations by the Government of Azerbaijan](#) in the run-up to the Eurovision Song Contest. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre is approaching corporate sponsors of Eurovision to respond to the human rights concerns raised in connection with the hosting of the event in Azerbaijan. The responses will be made public on 23 May, along with a list of any companies that fail to respond.

If any organization or individual wishes to comment on this issue, or on the company responses, the Resource Centre will also post those statements. If those comments criticise

the response of a particular company, the Resource Centre will invite that company to respond to the criticism.

### **About the Resource Centre**

[Business & Human Rights Resource Centre](#) is an independent non-profit organization that encourages companies to respect human rights. Our website links to reports on the human rights impacts (positive & negative) of 5100 companies worldwide, and provides guidance tools to assist companies and others working in this field.

When human rights concerns are raised by civil society, we invite companies to respond, and post each company response alongside the concerns. The usual response rate to the Resource Centre is 75% globally. Since 2005 the Centre has invited over 1000 company responses, to a range of human rights concerns. A [record of all past responses and non-responses is here](#). Victims and NGOs thank us for bringing global attention to their concerns and for eliciting responses from companies. Companies thank us for including their perspective and for providing the opportunity to present their responses in full. This process often leads to real improvements on the ground.

Mary Robinson, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and President of Ireland, is Chair of the Centre's International Advisory Network. The Centre's Academic Partners comprise 23 leading academic institutions. The Centre's researchers are based in Colombia, Hong Kong, India, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Senegal, South Africa, UK, Ukraine and USA.

For further details, see the ["About us"](#) section of our website.

---

For further information relating to this press release, please contact:

Christopher Avery, Director, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (based in London):  
[avery@business-humanrights.org](mailto:avery@business-humanrights.org)  
Telephone: +44 20 7636 7774

Annabel Short, Programme Director, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (based in New York): [short@business-humanrights.org](mailto:short@business-humanrights.org)  
Telephone: +1 212 564 9160