The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

TASS Deputy Chief Dismissed Following Controversial Azerbaijan Visit

July 25, 2025



Mikhail Gusman. **Peter Kovalev / TASS**

Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin has dismissed the first deputy director of state-run news agency TASS, according to an official decree published Friday.

The order did not specify a reason for Mikhail Gusman's dismissal.

Andrei Kondrashov, the agency's general director, thanked Gusman for "30 years of tireless work at TASS" and wished him success in future endeavors "with new teams."

While no official explanation was given, the move follows public backlash from pro-Kremlin figures over Gusman's recent appearance at a media forum in Azerbaijan, where he praised President Ilham Aliyev.

Speaking at the Shusha Global Media Forum earlier this month, Gusman lauded Azerbaijan's political course as "clear and well-defined," likening Aliyev to a "virtuoso violinist."

His remarks drew sharp criticism from nationalist bloggers and pundits, who accused him of

pandering to Baku amid heightened tensions between Russia and Azerbaijan.

Related article: From Plane Crash to Deadly Arrests: What's Behind the Russia-Azerbaijan Standoff

Sergei Kolyasnikov, author of the influential Zergulio Telegram channel, slammed Gusman and fellow commentator Sergei Markov, who also attended the forum, for praising Aliyev "at a time when our journalists are being held hostage in Azerbaijani prisons."

Alexander Kots, a reporter for the pro-Kremlin tabloid Komsomolskaya Pravda, similarly accused the pair of going to Azerbaijan "to bow down" to Aliyev.

Gusman, 75, was born in Baku and has served as a prominent figure in Russian media for decades. He held the first deputy director role at TASS since 1999 and also leads the Russian committee of UNESCO's International Program for the Development of Communication. He holds state honors recognizing his contributions to Russian culture and journalism.

Tensions between Moscow and Baku have been running high since a December 2024 incident in which an Azerbaijani Airlines flight en route to Grozny was allegedly shot down by Russian air defense systems over Kazakhstan.

Relations deteriorated further after two ethnic Azerbaijani men died during police sweeps in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg in June.

In response, Azerbaijani authorities detained and beat more than 10 Russian nationals, raided the offices of Sputnik Azerbaijan and arrested two of the Russian state media outlet's local employees.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/07/25/tass-deputy-chief-dismissed-following-controversial-visit-to-azerbaijan-a89958