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B7-0337/2011

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure

on Azerbaijan

**Marietje Schaake, Leonidas Donskis, Marielle De Sarnez, Ramon Tremosa i Balcells, Johannes Cornelis van Baalen, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy**  
on behalf of the ALDE Group

**European Parliament resolution on Azerbaijan**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Azerbaijan and, in particular, those of 27 October 2005<sup>1</sup> and 17 December 2009<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to resolution of 7 April 2011 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy - Eastern Dimension<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2010 on the need for an EU strategy for the South Caucasus<sup>4</sup>,
  - having regard to the statement by the spokesperson of Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle of 18 April 2011,
  - having regard to the final report of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission to the Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan 7 November 2010,
  - having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Azerbaijan is actively participating in the European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership and is committed to respect democracy, human rights and the rule of law,
- B. whereas 15 July 2010 marked the launch of negotiations on an EU-Azerbaijan Association Agreement, which is based on joint commitments to a set of shared values and covers a wide range of areas, including political dialogue, justice, freedom and security, as well as trade and cooperation in sectoral policies,
- C. whereas, according to the OSCE/ODIHR final report on the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, the elections did not constitute meaningful progress in the democratic development of the country,
- D. whereas the police crackdown on the demonstrations of 11 March, 2 April and 17 April 2011, the detention of over 50 peaceful activists and bloggers, and further repressive measures taken by the law enforcement against democratic opposition, free media and civil society activists are in breach of Azerbaijan's international commitments,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 272E, 9.11.2006, p. 567

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 286E, 22.10.2010, p. 27

<sup>3</sup> P7\_TA-PROV(2011)0153

<sup>4</sup> P7\_TA(2010)0193

- E. whereas the media climate is still deteriorating – in spite of the ENP and the Eastern Partnership – with the closure of independent TV and radio broadcasting organisations, the eviction of newspapers from their offices, court cases against members of the media, and physical attacks on journalists causing a widespread sense of fear and self-censorship among them,
  - F. whereas persecution of independent media and bloggers in Azerbaijan has assured a consistently negative rating for the independence of the media in Azerbaijan,
  - G. whereas Azerbaijan, as a member of the Council of Europe, is bound by international commitments to the principles of international law and to fundamental values,
1. Supports closer cooperation and the ongoing process of negotiations of the EU-Azerbaijan Association Agreement as the framework in which to develop closer co-operation and increase people-to-people contacts;
  2. Welcomes recent release from jail of the two bloggers Adnan Hajizade and Emin Abdullayev (Milli);
  3. Deplores the violent crackdown on peaceful demonstrators on 11 March, 2 April and 17 April 2011; calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to respect the right to freedom of assembly;
  4. Is concerned by the charges and sentences brought against civil society activists and human rights defenders Jabbar Savalan, Bakhtiyar Hajiyev, Dayanat Babayev, Rashadat Akhundov, Sakhavat Soltanli, Vidadi Isgandarov and Elnur Medjidli; deplores the continuing detention of Eynulla Faullayev and calls for his immediate release;
  5. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to release all members of the opposition, youth activists and bloggers remaining in custody after the peaceful demonstrations on 11 March and 17 April 2011;
  6. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to address the lack of police investigation into cases of violence and harassment against journalists and the fact that many crimes have so far gone unpunished; stresses that the safety of media workers must be improved as a matter of urgency;
  7. Recalls the statements by President Ilham Aliyev to make Azerbaijan a centre of information and communication technology in the region; in this context, expresses its concern over reported blocking of number of internet sites in the country and harassment of social media activists;
  8. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to remove all obstacles to exercising the rights of freedom of expression and information that might lead to self-censorship;
  9. Considers access to information and communication technologies, including free and uncensored access to the internet, essential for the development of democracy, the rule of law and as a means of promoting exchanges and communication between the

Azerbaijanis and the EU;

10. Urges the Azerbaijani authorities to pay special attention to the safety and freedom of civil-society activists, particularly those involved in non-governmental youth organisations, as well as journalists and the media, to take immediate steps to allow individuals to engage in peaceful, democratic activities, to allow such activities to be organised freely and without government interference and to protect journalists, following the recent wave of violence against media representatives;
11. Regrets recent written 'termination of activity' warnings sent from the Azerbaijani Justice Ministry to the National Democratic Institute and the Human Rights House Network and hopes that registration formalities will be resolved in order to allow for those organisations to pursue their work in Azerbaijan;
12. Welcomes the initiative taken by Council of Europe rapporteur for political prisoners, Christoph Strasser, to visit Azerbaijan; calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to accommodate the visit and provide opportunities for a meaningful programme;
13. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to address shortcomings identified by the OSCE/ODIHR final report on parliamentary elections and expects further cooperation with the Venice Commission to ensure that its electoral legislation is fully in line with international norms and standards;
14. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the HR/VP to make closer cooperation and the ongoing process of negotiations of the EU-Azerbaijan Association Agreement and further participation in the ENP conditional upon the Azerbaijani Government's fully respecting human rights, in particular freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of the press;
15. Regrets the armed incidents that result in the loss of human life that are taking place along the Line of Contact in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; calls on both sides to respect the ceasefire, restrain from the use of force or any threat thereof, and continue efforts for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; reiterates its full support for the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group and calls for the European Union to further increase its assistance to reach a peaceful settlement in the region;
16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, The President, Government and Parliament of Azerbaijan and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and OSCE/ODIHR.