

Question for written answer E-005465/2015
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 130
Lola Sánchez Caldentey (GUE/NGL)

Subject: VP/HR - Human rights violations in Azerbaijan

NGOs are pointing out that Azerbaijan is carrying out a crackdown on human rights defenders and, more generally, on any independent voices in the country. As a result of this unrelenting crackdown on human rights, key leaders of human rights organisations are behind bars, as are leading journalists and other peaceful activists. Among those detained are several of the country's most prominent human rights defenders and journalists.

In addition, new amendments to registration and funding laws are systematically impeding access to domestic and foreign funding, inter alia by requiring government licensing of all donors and approval of each funded project, which cuts off practically all funding for NGOs that seek to hold the government accountable. The amendments also provide the government with enormous discretion to dissolve, impose financial penalties on, and freeze the assets of, civil society organisations (CSOs) for minor violations of existing laws. Of particular concern are provisions that prevent national organisations from accessing local cash donations and allow the government to freeze or deny international funding to domestic CSOs if an activity is judged to 'undermine the interests of the state.'

Will the EU High Representative analyse this case and ask Azerbaijan to fulfil international standards on human rights protection and promotion?