

P7_TA(2011)0243

Azerbaijan

European Parliament resolution of 12 May 2011 on Azerbaijan

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Azerbaijan, in particular that of 17 December 2009¹,
 - having regard to its resolutions of 20 May 2010² on the need for an EU strategy for the South Caucasus, of 7 April 2011³ on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy – Eastern Dimension and of 20 January 2011⁴ on an EU Strategy for the Black Sea,
 - having regard to the statement by the spokesperson of the Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy of 18 April 2011 and the statement by the EU Delegation office in Baku of 10 March 2011,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers' meeting of 13 December 2010,
 - having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EC and Azerbaijan which entered into force in 1 July 1999,
 - having regard to the statements of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on the attack on journalists of 10 March 2011 and of 28 March 2011,
 - having regard to the report by the ODIHR Election Observation Mission on the parliamentary elections of 7 November 2010,
 - having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Azerbaijan is actively participating in the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, is a founding member of Euronest and is committed to respecting democracy, human rights and the rule of law, which are core values of these initiatives,
- B. whereas since 15 July 2010 negotiations have been launched on an EU-Azerbaijan Association Agreement based on joint commitments to a set of shared values, covering a wide range of areas, including political dialogue, justice, freedom and security, as well as trade and cooperation in sectoral policies,
- C. whereas although, according to the joint statement of the Election Observation Mission composed by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament, the 7 November 2010 parliamentary elections in the Republic of Azerbaijan were characterised by a peaceful atmosphere and all

¹ OJ C 286 E, 22.10.2010, p. 27.

² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2010)0193.

³ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0153.

⁴ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0025.

opposition parties participated in the political process, nonetheless the conduct of these elections overall was not sufficient to constitute meaningful progress in the democratic development of the country,

- D. whereas a wide-ranging clampdown on freedom of expression and assembly is being carried out in Azerbaijan following the peaceful protests against the government on 11 March and 2 April 2011; whereas the clampdown includes arrests, harassment and intimidation of civil society activists, media professionals and opposition politicians in Azerbaijan,
- E. whereas the cases of the activists Jabbar Savalan and Bakhtiyar Hajiev are of particular concern; whereas Mr Savalan, a member of the youth group of the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (APFP), and Mr Hajiyev, an activist and former parliamentary candidate, were apparently targeted for using Facebook to call for demonstrations against the government; whereas Mr Savalan was sentenced to two and a half years in prison for allegedly possessing drugs; whereas Mr Hajiev was arrested on 4 March after calling on Facebook for demonstrations against the government and now faces two years in jail for allegedly evading military service; whereas serious doubts exist as regards the fairness of the trials of Mr Savalan and Mr Hajiyev,
- F. whereas in mid-March Azerbaijani courts sentenced at least 30 people who took part in those peaceful protests to between 5 and 8 days in prison in late-night trials that were closed to the public; whereas most defendants did not have access to counsel of their choosing; whereas the police refused to allow detainees to contact lawyers and whereas lawyers for some of the defendants did not know when or where the trials were being held,
- G. whereas around 200 activists were arrested on 2 April 2011, including the head of the Youth Organisation of the Musavat Party, Tural Abbasli,
- H. whereas the Human Rights House Azerbaijan, which is a member of the International Human Rights House Network, registered in Azerbaijan in May 2007, was closed down by the authorities following an order of the Ministry of Justice issued on 10 March 2011; whereas the Ministry justified the closure by reference to a breach by the organisation of the Azerbaijani Law on Non-Governmental Organisations,
- I. whereas the European Court of Human Rights ordered the Republic of Azerbaijan to release the jailed journalist Eynulla Fatullayev from prison and to pay him EUR 25 000 in moral damages,
- J. whereas Azerbaijan is a member of the Council of Europe and a party to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) as well as a number of other international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - 1. Expresses its deep concern at the increasing number of incidents of harassment, attacks and violence against civil society and social network activists and journalists in Azerbaijan;
 - 2. Strongly deplores the practice of intimidating, arresting, prosecuting and convicting independent journalists and political activists on various criminal charges;
 - 3. Deplores the arrest of around 200 people prior to, and during, the anti-government protests of 2 April 2011 in Baku; calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to allow peaceful protest as well as freedom of assembly, which are central tenets of an open and democratic society;

deplores the physical violence used against protesters;

4. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to release all members of the opposition, youth activists and bloggers remaining in custody after the peaceful demonstrations of 11 March and 2 and 17 April 2011, to release Mr Savalan and Mr Hajiyevev and to drop the charges against them; calls on the Government of Azerbaijan to respect the international conventions that it has ratified by respecting freedom of expression;
5. Urges the authorities to safeguard all necessary conditions to allow the media, including opposition media, to operate, so that journalists can work and report freely without any pressure, and to pay special attention to the safety of journalists; in this regard recalls the pledge given by President Ilham Aliyev in 2005, in which he asserted that the rights of every journalist were protected and defended by the State;
6. Expresses its concern at reports of threats in prison against newspaper editor Eynulla Fatullayev, the deterioration in his health which has been exacerbated and denial of access to medical care, and calls for his immediate release;
7. Is worried about the worsening human rights situation in the Republic of Azerbaijan; calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to safeguard the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and other international treaties to which the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party and to respect OSCE and Council of Europe commitments;
8. Deplores recent written 'termination of activity' warnings sent from the Azerbaijani Justice Ministry to the National Democratic Institute and the Human Rights House Network and urges, in this respect, the Azerbaijani authorities to allow the latter organisation to continue its activities in the country without any further hindrance;
9. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to maintain a dialogue with members of civil-society organisations and to take all steps to allow individuals to freely engage in peaceful, democratic activities and to allow activists to organise freely and without government interference;
10. Encourages the Azerbaijani authorities to allow peaceful demonstrations to take place in relevant locations and urges them to refrain from intimidating the organisers by detaining them and charging them with criminal and other offences; regrets that some youth activists have been expelled from Baku State University after missing examinations while in police custody linked to their political activities;
11. Welcomes the recent release from jail of the two bloggers Adnan Hajizade and Emin Abdullayev (Milli);
12. Considers access to information and communication technologies, including free and uncensored access to the internet, essential for the development of democracy and the rule of law and as a means of promoting exchanges and communication between the Azerbaijanis and the EU;
13. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to address shortcomings identified by the OSCE/ODIHR final report on the parliamentary elections and expects further cooperation with the Venice Commission to ensure that Azerbaijan's electoral legislation is fully in line

with international norms and standards;

14. Calls for renewed efforts by Azerbaijan to implement in full during its final year the ENP Action Plan and on the Commission to continue to assist Azerbaijan in such efforts;
15. Welcomes the establishment of the new subcommittees of the EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Committee, which will strengthen the institutional framework for discussions in the field of justice, freedom and security and on respect for human rights and democracy;
16. Welcomes the Azerbaijani contribution to the Eastern Partnership and the participation of the delegation from the Milli Majlis in the inaugural session of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the High Representative / Vice-President of the Commission, the Council, the Commission, the President, Government and Parliament of Azerbaijan and the OSCE/ODIHR.