



Plenary sitting

B10-0142/2024

21.10.2024

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 136(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Azerbaijan, violation of human rights and international law
and relations with Armenia
(2024/2890(RSP))

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B10-0142/2024

European Parliament resolution on the situation in Azerbaijan, violation of human rights and international law and relations with Armenia (2024/2890(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950, ratified by Azerbaijan in 2002,
- having regard to the UN Charter,
- having regard to Geneva Conventions of 1949,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
- having regard to the joint EU-US-Armenia high-level meeting of 5 April 2024 in support of Armenia's resilience,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Armenia and Azerbaijan,
- having regard to the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part¹ (CEPA), which fully entered into force on 1 March 2021,
- having regard to Decision 99/614/EC, ECSC, Euratom of the Council and of the Commission of 31 May 1999 on the conclusion of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Azerbaijan, of the other part² (EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement), which has been in force since 1999,
- having regard to the launch of the EU Mission in Armenia on 20 February 2023,
- having regard to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, to which Armenia and Azerbaijan are parties,
- having regard to the statement of 24 August 2024 by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on behalf of the EU on recent post-election developments,
- having regard to the statement of preliminary findings and conclusions of the International Election Observation Mission of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on the early parliamentary elections of 1 September 2024 in Azerbaijan,

¹ OJ L 23, 26.1.2018, p. 4, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2018/104/oj.

² OJ L 246, 17.9.1999, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/1999/614/oj>.

- having regard to the statement by the European External Action Service (EEAS) spokesperson of 3 September 2024 on Azerbaijan’s early parliamentary elections,
 - having regard to the statement by the EEAS spokesperson of 29 May 2024 on the human rights situation in Azerbaijan,
 - having regard to the Memorandum of Understanding on a strategic partnership in the field of energy signed between the EU and Azerbaijan on 18 July 2022,
 - having regard to the 2023 Eastern Partnership Index,
 - having regard to Rule 136(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Azerbaijan has serious shortcomings in the area of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and assembly and media freedom, and engages in repression of political activists, journalists and civil society, all of which distances Azerbaijan from democratic norms and international human rights standards; whereas corruption and a lack of judicial independence further undermine the country’s governance, while government authorities continue to suppress dissent and persecute critics; whereas despite international agreements and calls for reform, including from the European Parliament, Azerbaijan has made limited to no progress on improving its human rights record;
- B. whereas journalists, human rights defenders and activists have been imprisoned in the country, with approximately 30 prominent figures behind bars on politically motivated charges, and a surge in arbitrary arrests and detentions has been reported, their number having tripled as Azerbaijan silences opposition ahead of the upcoming 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku, and there are allegations of torture and beatings; whereas notable civil society organisations have called for the EU and international leaders to pressure Azerbaijan to improve its human rights record during COP29, urging the release of political prisoners and an end to arbitrary prosecutions;
- C. whereas according to the US Department of State’s Azerbaijan 2023 Human Rights Report, there were credible allegations that the Azerbaijani Government ‘used violence or threats of violence against individuals in other countries as politically motivated reprisal’; whereas according to this report, the Azerbaijani Government ‘limited freedom of expression and media independence’, and ‘there were reports that dissidents and journalists who lived outside the country suffered digital harassment and intimidation of family members who remained in Azerbaijan’;
- D. whereas early parliamentary elections were held in Azerbaijan on 1 September 2024, and, according to the OSCE’s International Election Observation Mission, took place ‘in a restrictive political and legal environment that does not enable genuine pluralism and resulted in a contest devoid of competition’;
- E. whereas September 2024 was the fourth anniversary of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, and marked one year since Azerbaijan forcibly regained control over Nagorno-Karabakh, which is part of its internationally recognised territory; whereas all the state institutions of the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Republic were dissolved as of 1 January 2024; whereas these events, preceded by Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Lachin

corridor, resulted in the mass exodus of almost the entire population of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh; whereas, as a result, Nagorno-Karabakh has been entirely ethnically cleansed of its Armenian population, who had been living there for centuries;

- F. whereas over more than three decades, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has resulted in tens of thousands of casualties, immense destruction, including of cultural, religious and historical heritage, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people on both sides; whereas there are six interstate cases before the European Court of Human Rights between Armenia and Azerbaijan in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh region, with both countries standing accused of having violated human rights conventions; whereas Azerbaijan has repeatedly been accused of ethnic cleansing, particularly in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, where it is said to have displaced over 100 000 ethnic Armenians;
- G. whereas three decades of diplomacy and peacebuilding efforts by the OSCE, the EU and other international actors have failed to find a peaceful solution to the conflict and, therefore, to deter Azerbaijan from its use of military force;
- H. whereas according to the US Department of State's Azerbaijan 2023 Human Rights Report, the Azerbaijani Government 'did not take credible steps to punish the majority of officials who were reported to have committed human rights abuses'; whereas the report also states that there was 'no reported progress on government investigations of alleged abuses committed by Azerbaijani armed forces or individuals during the 2020 and 2022 hostilities';
- I. whereas it is necessary to ensure connectivity between Europe and Asia while avoiding crossing Russian territory; whereas the South Caucasus is in a strategic position for promoting Europe-Asia connectivity, which is particularly important for the EU's energy capacities and for trade with Central Asia;
- J. whereas Armenia has already managed to weaken its ties with Russia in relation to security, as it has frozen its participation in the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization, although it remains a member of the Eurasian Economic Union;
- K. whereas the eighth meeting of the border commissions of Armenia and Azerbaijan, held on 19 April 2024, concluded with a preliminary agreement on the delimitation of four border sections;
- L. whereas the peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan appear to be at a standstill and it is unlikely that an agreement will be concluded and signed before COP29; whereas the peace deal should contribute to the long-term stability of bilateral relations and of the wider region as a whole; whereas this goal can only be achieved if the authorities of Armenia and Azerbaijan can guarantee peaceful coexistence and respect for minority rights;
- M. whereas Azerbaijan is a major oil and natural gas producer, particularly through the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli oil field and the Shah Deniz gas field in the Caspian Sea, and the country primarily uses the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline to export hydrocarbons to Europe, bypassing Russia and offering the EU an alternative energy source, which is valuable in this geopolitical climate; whereas Azerbaijan's economy is heavily reliant on oil and gas revenues, which make up more than 90 % of the country's export

revenues and account for a noteworthy portion of the government's budget;

- N. whereas gas contracts between Gazprom and SOCAR for the delivery of one billion cubic metres of gas from Russia to Azerbaijan between November 2022 and March 2023 have raised significant concerns about the re-export of Russian gas to the European market, particularly in light of the memorandum of understanding signed by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen; whereas the EU aims to reduce European dependence on Russian gas, but this agreement could be seen as undermining that goal, as Russian gas would still be flowing into Azerbaijan, thus potentially freeing up Azerbaijani gas for increased re-export to the EU; whereas there are significant challenges facing European efforts to replace Russian gas shipped via Ukraine with Azerbaijani gas by the end of 2024, and although Ukraine, the EU and Azerbaijan support the injection of Azerbaijani gas into Russian pipelines, Azerbaijan might lack sufficient gas supplies to make up the shortfall; whereas, in this regard, the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline could provide an alternative route to ensure adequate supply, but new infrastructure is required to enhance gas transmission capacity in the interconnections with the EU, particularly through Bulgaria and Romania on one side and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline on the other, in order to ensure a more efficient and secure flow of gas into the European market;
1. Expresses its concern about the human rights situation in Azerbaijan; urges Azerbaijan to fulfil its obligations under its own constitution and under international agreements to protect fundamental freedoms and respect the human dignity of its citizens, and to cease the use of criminal prosecution as a tool to suppress government critics and members of civil society;
 2. Calls on Azerbaijan to drop all charges against Gubad Ibadoghlu, Ilhamiz Guliyev and all other people imprisoned for exercising their fundamental rights, to release them and to ensure free and unhindered space for independent journalism and freedom of expression; calls on Azerbaijan to allow Dr Ibadoghlu to travel abroad, unhindered and to the country of his choice, to reunite with his family and to receive the medical care he urgently needs;
 3. Calls on the Commission, UN mechanisms and other international actors to step up their efforts to promote human rights and democratic governance in Azerbaijan ahead of COP29;
 4. Underlines that COP29 could be an opportunity for Azerbaijan to reaffirm its genuine commitment to its obligations under international law, instead of using it to gloss over its human rights record while continuing repressive practices;
 5. Calls on the Commission to work closely with the UN to urgently establish a comprehensive plan for investigating and clarifying the fate of the Armenian military personnel, including women, and the eight unarmed Armenian prisoners of war who were killed or reported missing in connection with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and to conduct impartial inquiries on the ground, facilitate information exchanges, secure unhindered access to detention facilities for international observers through the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, such observers having previously been denied access, and

launch a centralised database for tracing and resolving missing persons cases, while also providing the necessary support and resources to the families affected;

6. Demands that Azerbaijan release the 23 Armenian hostages who are still being held in Baku, including the former leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh;
7. Reiterates its condemnation of the Azerbaijani military incursions into the internationally recognised territory of Armenia in recent years; expresses its sympathy with the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians who had to flee their ancestral lands, and calls on the authorities in Baku to guarantee the safe return of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians and to uphold their rights to cultivate their culture and traditions; welcomes all efforts by the Government of Armenia to provide shelter and aid to the displaced Armenians;
8. Expresses deep concern for the preservation of cultural, religious and historical heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh; urges Azerbaijan to refrain from further destroying, neglecting or altering the origins of cultural, religious or historical heritage in the region; demands the protection of the Armenian cultural, historical and religious heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh in line with UNESCO standards and Azerbaijan's international commitments; insists that Azerbaijan allow a UNESCO mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and grant it the necessary access to heritage;
9. Strongly condemns Russia's increasing hybrid attempts to destabilise the political situation inside Armenia and in the region; is concerned that the EU Mission in Armenia is regularly targeted by Russian disinformation attempts and campaigns;
10. Reiterates the EU's commitment to peace, stability and prosperity in the Caucasus region; underlines its unequivocal support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Armenia and Azerbaijan; expresses support for the normalisation of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with the goal of achieving lasting peace; encourages both countries to continue to make progress on finalising an agreement and signing a peace deal as soon as possible;
11. Believes that genuine dialogue between Azerbaijan and Armenia is the only sustainable way forward and calls for the EU and its Member States to support such efforts, which must include the mutual recognition of territorial integrity, guarantees for the rights and security of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenian population and the release of the remaining prisoners, including the former leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh, and an end to the sham trials against them;
12. Stresses that EU involvement in the region should be practical and result-oriented, unlike the role played by Russia, which for decades has fuelled the conflict and used it for its own political gain; welcomes the fact that Armenia has frozen its participation in the Collective Security Treaty Organization; underlines that Azerbaijan's connectivity issues with its exclave of Nakhchivan should be resolved with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the President, Government and Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the President, Government and Parliament of the Republic of Armenia,

the Director-General of UNESCO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the UN and the Council of Europe.