



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Plenary sitting

16.9.2014

B8-0090/2014

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

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

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on persecution of human rights defenders in Azerbaijan
(2014/2832(RSP))

Charles Tannock
on behalf of the ECR Group

B8-0090/2014

**European Parliament resolution on persecution of human rights defenders in Azerbaijan
(2014/2832(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Azerbaijan, in particular those concerning human rights,

- having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and Azerbaijan which entered into force in 1999 and to the ongoing negotiations between the two parties on a new association agreement to replace the previous one

- having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure;

A. Whereas in the last months there has been a major escalation of government repression of independent civil society, journalists and human rights defenders;

B. Whereas since July 2014 numerous prominent human rights defenders have been imprisoned on politically motivated charges, including Leyla Yunus, director of the Institute for Peace and Democracy, accused of high treason, fraud, illegal business, tax evasion, and falsification of documents; her husband Arif Yunus; Rasul Jafarov, chair of Azerbaijan's Human Rights Club arrested on charges of illegal entrepreneurship, abuse of power, and tax evasion; and Intigam Aliyev, chair of the Legal Education Society;

C. Whereas many other people - political activists, rights defenders, journalists, bloggers, religious activists – have been imprisoned by the authorities in the past two years on similarly trumped-up charges, including hooliganism, drug possession, tax evasion, and even treason;

D. Whereas Ilgar Nasibov, a former freelance photographer, has been attacked and badly beaten by unknown assailants in Nakhichevan while he was in the office of the Democracy and NGO Development Resource Center;

E. Whereas the government has adopted restrictive new laws regulating nongovernmental organizations, which effectively forced many groups to shut down after their bank accounts were frozen or their sources of funding blocked following the government's refusal to authorize new grants from foreign donor organizations;

F. Whereas Azerbaijan will be the host of the 2015 European Olympic Games;

G. Whereas on 14 May 2014 Azerbaijan assumed the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CoE);

H. Whereas the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) issued numerous rulings in cases of breaches of human rights in Azerbaijan, the latest on 22 May 2014 in the case of Ilgar Mammadov, Chairman of the Republican Alternative Civic Movement (REAL); whereas

despite the ruling that his detention was politically motivated, the authorities refused to release him;

I. Whereas according to the Freedom House Azerbaijan has been classified as “not free” with 84 points out of 100, two points worse than in 2013;

J. Whereas Karen Petrosyan, Armenian citizen, who has been arrested by the Azeri servicemen on the line of contact, has been tortured and then killed while in detention;

1. Expresses its deep concern over the continuing deterioration of the human rights situation in the country;
2. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to cease its legal and extra-judicial harassment of civil society organisations, opposition politicians, independent journalists, stop the ongoing campaign of intimidation and allow them to work unimpeded;
3. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to undertake, without further delay, long-overdue human rights reforms, including the many outstanding accession commitments Azerbaijan undertook when joining the Council of Europe;
4. Calls on the EEAS and European Commission to put on hold negotiations toward a “Strategic Modernization Partnership” with Azerbaijan until the minimum steps are met;
5. Reminds the Azerbaijani authorities about their duty to protect democracy, freedom of expression and human rights in the country, as envisaged in the Constitution of Azerbaijan and in international agreements Azerbaijan is party to;
6. Urges the authorities in Azerbaijan to immediately release all prisoners of conscience and political prisoners held in the country;
7. Demands that those responsible for the brutal attack on Ilgar Nasibov as well as torturing and killing of Karen Petrosyan are found and brought to justice;
8. Welcomes the declaration by President Aliyev that the joint Committee between the Presidential Administration and the representatives of civil society, which worked from 2005 until December 2008, will be re-convened with participation of a representative of the Council of Europe;
9. Deplores the actions taken by the Azerbaijani government to curb contacts between the civil society, youth groups activists as well as intellectuals from Armenia and Azerbaijan, which are of extreme importance for bridging the long hostility between the two countries; in this regards, reminds of the important work done in this area by Ms Leyla Yunus and her husband, Arif;
10. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to guarantee digital freedoms, including uncensored access to information and communication, which are universal rights and are indispensable for human rights such as freedom of expression and access to information, and for ensuring transparency and accountability in public life;

11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the EEAS, the Governments and Parliaments of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the EU Member States, and the UN Human Rights Council.