



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Plenary sitting

16.9.2014

B8-0098/2014

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))

Ignazio Corrao, Fabio Massimo Castaldo
on behalf of the EFDD Group

B8-0098/2014

**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 human rights situation in Azerbaijan,

- having regard to the EU Statement of 14 August 2014 on the situation of human rights and civil society in Azerbaijan,
- having regard to the joint statements by Spokespersons of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Štefan Füle on the arrests and sentencing of human rights defenders,
- having regard to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Country progress report 2013 on Azerbaijan,
- having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas numerous arrests and sentencing of prominent members of civil society, including Rasul Jafarov, Leyla Yunus, Arif Yunus, Hasan Huseynli were carried out by Azerbaijani authorities in recent months;

B. whereas journalists, human right defenders and other civil society activists have been reporting regular abuse of right to freedom of expression and assembly;

C. whereas free civil society is a key for political stability and economic prosperity of a country,

D. whereas a strong partnership with civil society is an essential element of the Eastern Partnership of the European Union;

E. whereas Azerbaijan is a party to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and is currently holding rotating chairmanship of the Council of Europe;

1. Expresses serious concerns about the continuing deterioration of the human rights and basic freedoms situation in Azerbaijan;

2. Calls for the immediate release of journalists, human rights defenders, bloggers and other civil society activists detained while exercising universal human rights and held on politically-motivated charges;

3. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to uphold free trial, due process and other universal human rights and step up efforts to investigate cases of harassment and murder of journalists and activists;

4. Underlines the importance of independent and impartial judiciary for democracy in Azerbaijan and urges its authorities to continue the reform of the judicial system so that it meets international standards;
5. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to refrain from restricting freedom of the press and media, which is a fundamental aspect of an open and democratic society;
6. Is very concerned about recent amendments to legislation which severely restricts the functioning of NGOs in Azerbaijan and calls on the Milli Mejlis to revise this legislation;
7. Urges the Azerbaijani authorities to reinvigorate the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan adopted in 2011;
8. Stresses that democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms are core values of the Eastern Partnership and the Council of Europe and calls on Azerbaijan to fully respect its commitments and obligations undertaken within this framework;
9. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to comply with all rulings of the European Court on Human Rights concerning Azerbaijan;
10. Notes that the EU is the main foreign donor to civil society organisations in Azerbaijan; strongly supports the new EU ‘Support to Civil Society Programme’ aimed at enabling civil society to participate in the implementation of national reforms and democratic development as well as the recently launched EU programme with a special focus on higher and vocational education aimed at modernisation of the Azerbaijan's education system and increasing civil society's participation in the education sector; asks the Commission to closely monitor that these funds are used efficiently and transparently;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the EEAS, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE.