



Plenary sitting

8.9.2015

B8-0858/2015

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 Azerbaijan
(2015/2840(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group

**European Parliament resolution on Azerbaijan
(2015/2840(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous urgency resolutions on Azerbaijan, in particular those of 18 September 2014 on the persecution of human rights defenders in Azerbaijan,
 - having regard to the statement of 1 September 2015 by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn on the sentencing of Khadija Ismayilova, independent journalist in Azerbaijan,
 - having regards to the statements on the verdict handed down to Leyla Yunus and Arif Yunus by the President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz and High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini;
 - having regard to the EU Statement of 19 August 2015 on Human Rights in Azerbaijan,
 - having regard to the joint statement of 24 June 2015 by the Human Rights Councils of the UN on the situation of human rights in Azerbaijan,
 - having regard to the joint statement of 1 September 2015 by the OSCE and Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on the sentence of journalist Khadija Ismayilova,
 - having regard to statement of 24 June 2015 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on Human Rights in Azerbaijan,
 - having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the general climate of human rights and freedom of speech is continually deteriorating, and authorities are targeting NGOs, civil society activists, human rights defenders and journalists;
- B. whereas journalist Khadija Ismayilova, an award-winning investigative journalist for RFE/RL, was sentenced to 7.5 years in prison on alleged charges of misappropriation, embezzlement and tax evasion; whereas after publishing several stories of corruption concerning the president's family and before her arrest in December 2014, she received threats and warnings to stop her investigation;

- C. whereas on 9 August 2015 journalist Rasim Aliyev died after being attacked and beaten for his critical remarks towards an Azerbaijani football player;
- D. whereas Leyla Yunus, director of the Institute for Peace and Democracy, Arif Yunus, a historian, and Rasul Jafarov, chair of Azerbaijan's Human Rights Club, have been sentenced to long prison terms on dubious charges;
- E. whereas many other people - political activists, rights defenders, journalists, bloggers, religious activists – were arrested and sentenced to prison terms in the past two years on similarly dubious charges, including hooliganism, drug possession, tax evasion, and even treason;
- F. whereas presidential elections in Azerbaijan are scheduled on 1 November 2015; whereas European Parliament declined to send an Election Observation Mission, as it was assessed that the background for holding free and fair elections is not present and limitations on the freedom of expression, assembly and association in the country make it impossible to create a level playing field for candidates and to organise a genuinely competitive vote;
1. Expresses its deep concern over the continuing deterioration of the human rights situation in the country and reiterates that full respect for human rights should be central for the framework of further collaboration between the EU and Azerbaijan;
 2. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to unconditionally and immediately release Khadija Ismayilova and to stop its brutal crackdown on political activists, journalists and human rights defenders;
 3. Expresses its sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Rasim Aliyev and calls on Azerbaijani authorities for a full and transparent investigation in order to identify the perpetrators and to bring them to justice; notes with concern allegations put forward by group of journalists that Rasim Aliyev died because he did not receive appropriate assistance from doctors taking care of him in the hospital;
 4. Calls on Azerbaijani authorities to review the case of Leyla and Arif Yunus in a transparent and fair process and in full respect with international commitments of the country; furthermore reiterates its call to ensure the urgent provision of suitable medical care, including medication and hospitalisation to Leyla Yunus;
 5. 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;
 6. Reiterates its 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;
 7. Is extremely concerned about the situation for LGBTI people in Azerbaijan; strongly condemns political hate speech against LGBTI people coming from the highest levels;

calls on the Azerbaijani government to stop obstructing and intimidating human rights defenders working on the rights of LGBTI people;

8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the President, Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation.