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*Plenary sitting*

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**B8-0059/2019**

15.1.2019

## **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, notably the case of Mehman Huseynov  
(2019/2511(RSP))

**Charles Tannock, Jana Žitňanská, Monica Maçovei, Valdemar  
Tomaševski, Valdemar Tomaševski, Branislav Škripek**  
on behalf of the ECR Group

**European Parliament resolution on Azerbaijan, notably the case of Mehman Huseynov (2019/2511(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Azerbaijan, in particular those concerning the human rights situation and the rule of law,
- having regard to the established relationship between the EU and Azerbaijan, which took effect in 1999 in the form of a PCA, the creation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and Azerbaijan’s participation in the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly,
- having regard to the mandate adopted on 14th November 2016 for the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to negotiate, on behalf of the EU and its Member States, a comprehensive agreement with the Republic of Azerbaijan and the launch of the negotiations on the abovementioned agreement on 7th February 2017,
- having regard to the 15th meeting of the EU - Azerbaijan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee in Baku on 6 - 8 May 2018,
- having regard to the statement of the HRVP on the sentencing of Mehman Huseynov in Azerbaijan of 7th March 2017,
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. Whereas independent blogger Mehman Huseynov was arrested and sentenced to 2-years in prison in March 2017 on trumped-up charges of defaming an entire police station, following his statement in front of the courthouse in which he described abuses he had suffered in the police station;

B. Whereas Mehman Huseynov is due to be released in March 2019, he has been facing a possible additional 5 to 7-year prison sentence on charges of "using violence to resist a person in authority" under the Article 315.2, which was later changed into Article 317.2 - "application of violence not dangerous to life or health of employees of criminal - executive establishments or investigator isolators";

C. Whereas on 26 December Mehman Huseynov started a hunger strike against the potential additional charges; whereas as of 9 January he was reported to be in critical condition and suffering from varicose vein rupture and requires urgent medical intervention;

D. Whereas on 11 July 2018 the EU and Azerbaijan finalised the Partnership Priorities that set the joint policy priorities that will guide and enhance the EU-Azerbaijan partnership over the coming years,

E. Whereas the climate for media and free speech in Azerbaijan is growingly repressive, with at least 10 journalist serving prison terms, while over 20 independent websites have been blocked since May 2017, including Azadliq Radio (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Azerbaijan Service) and its international service, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty and others;

F. Whereas amendments introduced to the Code of Civil and Administrative Procedure and the Bar Act in late 2017 prohibit practicing lawyers, who are not members of the Bar Association from appearing in the court;

1. Expresses concern with new charges brought against Mr Huseynov and calls on Azerbaijani authorities to ensure that these are subject to due process; expects that Mr Huseynov will be released as originally planned in March;
2. Expresses serious concern with the deterioration of the health of Mr Huseynov as a result of the hunger strike; recognises the decision of the authorities to grant the EU officials access to him calls for ensuring a regular and adequate medical assistance provided in a suitable facility;
3. Welcomes the releases in Azerbaijan of several high-profile human rights defenders, journalists, opposition members and activists over the last years and calls on the authorities to unconditionally release the remaining ones, namely Afgan Mukhtarli, Ilkin Rustamzadeh, Rashad Ramazanov, Seymur Hazi, Giyas Ibrahimov, Bayram Mammadov, Araz Guliyev, Tofiq Hasanli, Ilgiz Qahramanov, Afgan Sadygov and others, including but not limited to those covered by the relevant judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)
4. Calls on Azerbaijan to fully respect freedom of the press and media, both in legislation and in practice and both online and offline, to guarantee freedom of expression in line with international standards and to end censorship of criticism of the government via media outlets;
5. Calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to amend the Bar Act and allow independent practicing lawyers to represent their clients in courts and to stop the practice of arbitrary disbarment of lawyers;
6. Underlines the importance of the new partnership agreement between the European Union and Azerbaijan; stresses that democratic reforms, the rule of law, good governance, and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms must be at the core of the new agreement;
7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the European External Action Service, the European Council, the Commission, the President, Government and Parliament of Azerbaijan and Georgia, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the UN Human Rights Council.