

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0593/09
by Koenraad Dillen (NI)
to the Council

Subject: Restriction of freedom of expression in Azerbaijan

Freedom of expression is protected by Article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Azerbaijan has signed both these instruments.

According to Human Rights Watch, the trial is currently being held in Baku of Leyla Yunus, a human rights activist who has criticised the lack of freedom of expression in her country and the modus operandi of the police, this case having been brought by the Ministry of the Interior. She is charged with 'insulting the government' and causing 'moral damage' to the country.

In the past two years, the government in Baku has arrested innumerable journalists and intimidated human rights activists. Anyone who criticises the government runs the risk of arrest.

Is the Council aware of these alarming developments in Baku?

What pressure will the Council bring to bear to remind the government that, as a party to the European Convention on Human Rights, Azerbaijan must respect freedom of opinion?