



TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2024)0029

Situation in Azerbaijan, violation of human rights and international law and relations with Armenia

European Parliament resolution of 24 October 2024 on the situation in Azerbaijan, violation of human rights and international law and relations with Armenia (2024/2890(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Azerbaijan, Armenia and the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh,
- having regard to the relevant documents and international agreements, including but not limited to the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Alma-Ata Declaration of 21 December 1991,
- having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950, ratified by Azerbaijan in 2002 and to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
- having regard to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict,
- having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement of 22 April 1996 between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Azerbaijan, of the other part¹,
- having regard to the statements by the European External Action Service spokesperson of 29 May 2024 on the human rights situation in Azerbaijan and of 3 September 2024 on early parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan,
- having regard to Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe resolution 2527 (2024) of 24 January 2024 entitled ‘Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Azerbaijan’,
- having regard to the Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions of the Election Observation Mission to the Early Presidential Elections held on 7 February 2024 and to the Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions of the International Election

¹ OJ L 246, 17.9.1999, p. 3, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/1999/614/oj.

Observation Mission to the Early Parliamentary Elections in Azerbaijan held on 1 September 2024,

- having regard to the report of 29 March 2023 by the Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance on Azerbaijan and to the memorandum of 21 October 2021 by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on the humanitarian and human rights consequences following the 2020 outbreak of hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh,
 - having regard to the orders of the International Court of Justice of 22 February 2023, of 6 July 2023 and of 17 November 2023 on the request for the indication of provisional measures for the application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (*Armenia v Azerbaijan*),
 - having regard to Rules 136(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the choice of Azerbaijan’s capital Baku as the venue for the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29), scheduled to take place from 11 to 22 November 2024, has sparked controversy, notably owing to Azerbaijan’s worsening human rights record, as well as recent and blatant violations of international law, including aggressive behaviour towards its neighbour Armenia; whereas respect for fundamental human rights and civil society participation are enshrined in the host country agreement through which the Azerbaijani Government committed to uphold these rights; whereas in the lead-up to this major international conference, the Azerbaijani authorities have intensified their repression of civil society organisations, activists, opposition politicians and the remaining independent media through detentions and judicial harassment; whereas corruption and a lack of judicial independence further undermine governance;
- B. whereas civil society organisations list over 300 political prisoners in Azerbaijan, including Gubad Ibadoghlu, Anar Mammadli, Bakhtiyar Hajiyev, Tofiq Yagublu, Ilhamiz Guliyev, Aziz Orujov, Bahruz Samadov, Akif Gurbanov and many others; whereas there are credible reports of violations of prisoners’ human rights, including detention in inhumane conditions, torture and refusal of adequate medical care;
- C. whereas prominent human rights defender and climate advocate, Anar Mammadli, has been in pre-trial detention since 30 April 2024 on bogus charges of conspiracy to bring illegal foreign currency into the country and his health has deteriorated significantly while in custody; whereas Gubad Ibadoghlu, a political economist, opposition figure and one of the finalists for the 2024 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, was arrested by Azerbaijani authorities in July 2023 and remained in detention until 22 April 2024, when he was transferred to house arrest; whereas his health has deteriorated significantly since his arrest, as a result of torture, inhumane detention conditions and refusal of adequate medical care, thus endangering his life; whereas the health of Gubad Ibadoghlu’s wife, Irada Bayramova, continues to deteriorate as a result of the physical violence she suffered during her detention by the Azerbaijani authorities; whereas on 4 December 2023 human rights activist Ilhamiz Guliyev was arrested on politically motivated charges a few months after he gave an anonymous interview to Abzas Media about the alleged police practice of planting drugs on political activists;

- D. whereas for more than a decade and with increasing determination, Azerbaijani authorities have been reducing space for civil society, arbitrarily closing down non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and arresting or forcing into exile civil society representatives; whereas in recent years, the Azerbaijani authorities have imposed increasingly stringent restrictions on civil society organisations; whereas activists, journalists, political opponents and others have been imprisoned on fabricated and politically motivated charges;
- E. whereas according to human rights defenders, crackdowns on civil society have occurred around other major international events hosted by Azerbaijan, including Eurovision 2012 and the European Games 2015;
- F. whereas the Azerbaijani regime appears to extend its repressive actions beyond its borders; whereas the ongoing crackdown on freedom of expression in Azerbaijan is also reflected in reports of transnational repression and reprisals against family members of detainees; whereas, since 2020, Mahammad Mirzali, an Azerbaijani dissident blogger, has been the target of several assassination attempts in France; whereas, on 29 September 2024, Vidadi Isgandarli, a critic of the Azerbaijani regime living as a political refugee in France, was attacked in his home and succumbed to his injuries two days later; whereas the Azerbaijani authorities have also engaged in politically motivated prosecutions of EU citizens, as seen in the case of Théo Clerc, prompting at least one Member State to formally warn its citizens against travelling to Azerbaijan owing to the risk of arbitrary detention;
- G. whereas Azerbaijan has implemented a systematic policy of bribing officials and elected representatives in Europe in order to downplay Azerbaijan's human rights record and to silence critics, as part of a widely used strategy described as 'caviar diplomacy'; whereas some cases have been investigated and some of those involved have been prosecuted and convicted by national courts in several EU Member States;
- H. whereas a number of European Court of Human Rights decisions have found that Azerbaijan has violated human rights; whereas according to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, more than 320 court judgments against Azerbaijan have not yet been executed or have been only partially implemented, which is the highest number among all state parties to the European Convention on Human Rights;
- I. whereas on 3 July 2024, the Council of Europe's European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) publicly denounced Azerbaijan's 'refusal to improve the situation in the light of the Committee's recommendations' and the 'persistent lack of cooperation of the Azerbaijani authorities with the CPT';
- J. whereas the PACE decided in January 2024 not to ratify the credentials of the Azerbaijani delegation, noting its 'very serious concerns as to ...[Azerbaijan's] respect for human rights'; whereas the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe noted that its Monitoring Committee's rapporteurs were not allowed to meet with people who had been detained on allegedly politically motivated charges, and that the Azerbaijani delegation refused to allow the rapporteur for the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights to visit the country;

- K. whereas according to the Election Observation Mission led by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the early presidential election held on 7 February 2024 took place in a restrictive environment and was marked by the stifling of critical voices and the absence of political alternatives; whereas Azerbaijan held early parliamentary elections on 1 September 2024 in what the OSCE/ODIHR-led International Election Observation Mission described as a restrictive political and legal environment that did not enable genuine pluralism and resulted in a contest devoid of competition; whereas in the period leading up to the parliamentary elections, several government critics were detained;
- L. whereas media legislation in Azerbaijan has become increasingly repressive, with the February 2022 media law effectively legalising censorship; whereas several other laws affecting the media also violate the country's international obligations with regard to freedom of expression and press freedom; whereas public criticism of the authorities is subject to severe penalties;
- M. whereas according to Reporters Without Borders, virtually the entire media sector in Azerbaijan is under official control, with no independent television or radio broadcasts from within the country, and all critical print newspapers shut down; whereas the authorities continue to suppress the last remaining independent media and repress journalists who reject self-censorship; whereas Azerbaijan has intensified its repression against the remaining independent media, such as Abzas Media, Kanal 13 and Toplum TV, through detentions and judicial harassment;
- N. whereas the Azerbaijani laws regulating the registration, operation and funding of NGOs are highly restrictive and arbitrarily implemented, thus effectively criminalising unregistered NGO activity; whereas Freedom House's 2024 index ranks Azerbaijan among the least free countries in the world, below Russia and Belarus;
- O. whereas gas contracts between Gazprom and SOCAR for the delivery of one billion cubic metres of gas from Russia to Azerbaijan between November 2022 and March 2023 have raised significant concerns about the re-export of Russian gas to the European market, particularly in the context of the signed memorandum of understanding on the strategic partnership in the field of energy; whereas the EU aims to reduce European dependence on Russian gas, but this agreement could be seen as undermining that goal, as Russian gas would still be flowing into Azerbaijan, thus potentially freeing up Azerbaijani gas for increased re-export to the EU; whereas there are also worrying reports of Russian gas being rebranded as Azerbaijani for sale in the EU;
- P. whereas Azerbaijani leaders have engaged in anti-EU and anti-Western rhetoric; whereas Azerbaijan has intensified its disinformation campaigns targeting the EU and its Member States, with a specific focus on France; whereas Azerbaijan has actively interfered in European politics under the guise of 'anti-colonialism', notably in overseas countries and territories such as New Caledonia;
- Q. whereas in addition, in September 2023, after months of the illegal blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan launched a pre-planned, unjustified military attack on the territory, forcing over 100 000 ethnic Armenians to flee to Armenia, which amounts to ethnic cleansing; whereas as a result, Nagorno-Karabakh has been almost entirely

emptied of its Armenian population, who had been living there for centuries; whereas this attack represents a gross violation of human rights and international law, a clear breach of the trilateral ceasefire statement of 9 November 2020 and a failure to uphold commitments made during EU-mediated negotiations;

- R. whereas the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh lost their property and belongings while fleeing the Azerbaijani military push in 2023 and have been unable to recover them since; whereas actions amounting to ethnic cleansing have continued since then; whereas the EU has provided humanitarian aid to people displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh; whereas credible reports confirm the organised destruction of Armenian cultural and religious heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh; whereas Azerbaijani leaders and officials repeatedly use hate speech against Armenians;
- S. whereas both Azerbaijan and Armenia are bound by international humanitarian law and the Third Geneva Convention protects prisoners of war from all forms of torture and cruel treatment; whereas reports indicate that 23 Armenian prisoners are currently being held in Azerbaijani prisons without adequate legal representation, including eight former leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh, some of whom have received long prison sentences;
- T. whereas in February 2023, the EU deployed the European Union Mission in Armenia (EUMA) to observe developments at the international border with Azerbaijan; whereas Azerbaijan has refused to cooperate with EUMA and the mission has been the target of disinformation by Azerbaijani authorities and government-controlled media; whereas the Azerbaijani leadership continues to make irredentist statements with reference to the sovereign territory of Armenia; whereas the Azerbaijani army continues to occupy no less than 170 km² of the sovereign territory of Armenia;
- U. whereas Armenia and Azerbaijan have engaged in negotiations on a peace treaty, the normalisation of their relations and border delimitation, both before and after the 2023 attack on Nagorno-Karabakh; whereas, despite mediation efforts by the EU and others, no peace agreement has been signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia; whereas, although both governments have stated that they are close to an agreement, recent remarks by the Azerbaijani president raise concern about Baku's willingness to find a compromise to conclude the negotiations;
- V. whereas the EU fully supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Azerbaijan and Armenia and actively supports efforts towards a sustainable peace agreement between the two countries, achieved by peaceful means and respecting the rights of the population concerned;
- W. whereas since Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, Azerbaijan has deepened its relations with Russia, including political and economic ties, as well as increased cooperation between their intelligence services; whereas Russia has openly backed Azerbaijan in its aggressive behaviour towards Armenia;
- 1. Strongly condemns the domestic and extraterritorial repression by the Azerbaijani regime against activists, journalists, opposition leaders and others, including EU nationals, which has noticeably intensified ahead of COP29; urges the Azerbaijani authorities to release all persons arbitrarily detained or imprisoned on account of their political views, to drop all politically motivated charges and to cease all forms of

repression, both within and beyond Azerbaijan; recalls in this context the names of Tofig Yagublu, Akif Gurbanov, Bakhtiyar Hajiyev, human rights defenders and journalists, including Ulvi Hasanli, Sevinj Vagifqizi, Nargiz Absalamova, Hafiz Babali and Elnara Gasimova, Aziz Orujov, Rufat Muradli, Avaz Zeynalli, Elnur Shukurov, Alasgar Mammadli, Ilhamiz Guliyev and Farid Ismayilov, as well as of civil society activists arrested after March 2024 such as Anar Mammadli, Farid Mehralizade, Iqbal Abilov, Bahruz Samadov, Emin Ibrahimov and Famil Khalilov; expresses deep concern about the environment of fear that this has created inside the country, leaving civil society effectively silenced;

2. Reiterates its call for the Azerbaijani authorities to drop all charges against Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu and allow him to travel abroad, unhindered and to the country of his choice, to reunite with his family, to receive the medical care he urgently needs and attend the Sakharov Prize ceremony in Strasbourg in December 2024; calls on Azerbaijan to ensure that he receives an independent medical examination by a doctor of his own choosing and to allow him to receive treatment abroad; calls on all EU representatives and individual Member States to actively support the release from house arrest of Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu and insist on his release in every exchange with the Azerbaijani authorities;
3. Demands that freedom of the press and expression be guaranteed and that media organisations not be restricted; calls, therefore, on the Azerbaijani Government to release journalists working for Abzas Media and Toplum TV, including Ulvi Hasanli, Sevinj Vagifqizi and Alasgar Mammadli;
4. Considers that Azerbaijan's ongoing human rights abuses are incompatible with its hosting of COP29; urges EU leaders, in particular Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, to use COP29 as an opportunity to remind Azerbaijan of its international obligations and to meaningfully address the country's human rights record in their interactions with the Azerbaijani authorities, including by calling for the unconditional release of all persons arbitrarily detained or imprisoned on account of their political views and by requesting to meet with political prisoners while in the country; calls for the EU and its Member States to do their utmost to ensure that United Nations Climate Change conferences are not hosted in countries with poor human rights records;
5. Reminds the Azerbaijani authorities of their obligations to respect fundamental freedoms, and calls on them to repeal repressive legislation that drives independent NGOs and media to the margins of the law; calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to repeal repressive legislation on the registration and funding of NGOs to bring them into line with Venice Commission recommendations;
6. Recalls that the 1996 EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which is the legal basis for bilateral relations, is based on respect for democracy and the principles of international law and human rights and that these have been systematically violated in Azerbaijan;
7. Reminds the Azerbaijani Government of its international obligations to safeguard the dignity and rights of detainees, ensuring that they receive adequate medical care, are detained in humane conditions and are protected from any mistreatment; calls on the Azerbaijani Government to swiftly comply with long-standing recommendations of the Council of Europe's European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or

Degrading Treatment or Punishment on the subject of the widespread recourse to physical ill treatment – including, on occasion, torture – by the police in Azerbaijan; calls on the Azerbaijani Government to implement all the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights;

8. Reiterates its call for EU sanctions to be imposed under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime on Azerbaijani officials who have committed serious human rights violations; calls on the EU Special Representative for Human Rights to request meetings with political prisoners in Azerbaijan;
9. Insists that any future partnership agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan be made conditional on the release of all political prisoners, the implementation of legal reforms and the overall improvement of the human rights situation in the country, as well as on Azerbaijan demonstrating its genuine readiness to faithfully engage in the negotiation of a peace agreement with Armenia and to respect the rights of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians;
10. Calls for the EU to end its reliance on gas exports from Azerbaijan; calls on the Commission to suspend the 2022 memorandum of understanding on the strategic partnership in the field of energy and to act accordingly;
11. Reaffirms its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Azerbaijan and Armenia and strongly supports the normalisation of their relations based on the principles of the mutual recognition of territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders, in accordance with the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration; reiterates its demand for the withdrawal of Azerbaijan's troops from the entirety of Armenia's sovereign territory; calls on Azerbaijan to unequivocally commit to respecting Armenia's territorial integrity; highlights that Azerbaijan's connectivity issues with its exclave of Nakhchivan should be resolved with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia; reiterates its position that the EU should be ready to impose sanctions on any individuals and entities that threaten the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Armenia;
12. Condemns any military aggression, use of force or hybrid threats against Armenia, as well as foreign interference and attempts to destabilise the political situation in Armenia; welcomes, furthermore, the decision to adopt the first assistance measure under the European Peace Facility in support of Armenian armed forces and calls for the cooperation between Armenia and the EU to be further reinforced in the field of security and defence; welcomes the actions undertaken by several Member States to provide defensive military support to Armenia and urges the Member States to consider similar initiatives; welcomes the new momentum in bilateral relations between the EU and Armenia, which is strongly supported by the authorities in Yerevan; calls on the Commission and the Council to actively support Armenia's desire for increased cooperation with the EU;
13. Expresses its support for the activities of the European Union Mission in Armenia (EUMA) and underscores the important role it plays; reiterates its concern regarding the repeated smear campaigns originating from Azerbaijan against EUMA; calls on EUMA to continue to closely monitor the evolving security situation on the ground, provide transparent reporting to Parliament and actively contribute to conflict resolution efforts;

calls for the EU and its Member States to strengthen EUMA's mandate, increase its size and extend its duration;

14. Supports all initiatives and activities that could lead to the establishment of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the signing of a long-awaited peace agreement; calls on Azerbaijan to demonstrate genuine efforts to this end; warns Azerbaijan that any military action against Armenia would be unacceptable and would have serious consequences for the partnership between Azerbaijan and the EU; welcomes the Armenia-Azerbaijan joint statement of 7 December 2023 on confidence-building measures; welcomes the progress made in the framework of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border delimitation process, which has led to an agreement on several sections of the border; encourages both sides to take further steps on the remaining sections; calls for the EU to cease all technical and financial assistance to Azerbaijan that might contribute to strengthening its military or security capabilities; calls on the Member States to freeze exports of all military and security equipment to Azerbaijan;
15. Calls for the full implementation of all orders issued by the International Court of Justice, including the order of 17 November 2023 indicating provisional measures regarding the safe, unimpeded and expeditious return of people who fled Nagorno-Karabakh; recalls that the decision to host COP29 in Baku was made after Azerbaijan failed to comply with the above-mentioned International Court of Justice order as well as those of 7 December 2021 and of 22 February 2023; reiterates its call for independent investigations into the abuses committed by Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh; reiterates its call on the Azerbaijani authorities to allow the safe return of the Armenian population to Nagorno-Karabakh, to genuinely engage in a comprehensive and transparent dialogue with them, to provide robust guarantees for the protection of their rights, including their land and property rights, the protection of their distinct identity and their civic, cultural, social and religious rights, and to refrain from any inflammatory rhetoric that could incite discrimination against Armenians; urges the Azerbaijani authorities to release all 23 Armenian prisoners of war detained following Azerbaijan's retaking of the Nagorno-Karabakh region;
16. Reiterates its call for the EU institutions and the Member States to continue to offer assistance to Armenia to deal with the refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh; calls for the EU, in this regard, to provide a new package of assistance to Armenia to help the Armenian Government address the humanitarian needs of refugees; welcomes all efforts by the Government of Armenia to provide shelter and aid to the displaced Armenians;
17. Expresses deep concern regarding the preservation of cultural, religious and historical heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh following the massive exodus of its Armenian population; urges Azerbaijan to refrain from further destruction, neglect or alteration of the origins of cultural, religious or historical heritage in the region and calls on it instead to strive to preserve, protect and promote this rich diversity; demands the protection of the Armenian cultural, historical and religious heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh in line with UNESCO standards and Azerbaijan's international commitments; insists that Azerbaijan allow a UNESCO mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and grant it the necessary access;
18. Deplores steps taken by Azerbaijan towards the secessionist entity in occupied Cyprus, which are against international law and the provisions of UN Security Council Resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984); calls on Azerbaijan to respect the principles of

sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and to not invite the secessionist entity in occupied Cyprus to any meetings of the Organization of Turkic States;

19. Condemns Azerbaijan's repeated attempts to denigrate and destabilise Member States, including through the so-called Baku Initiative Group; condemns in particular its support for irredentist groups and disinformation operations targeting France, especially in the French departments and territories of New Caledonia, Martinique and Corsica; recalls that these methods were used against Germany in 2013; denounces the smear campaigns targeting Denmark; regrets the smear campaign aimed at damaging France's reputation by calling into question its capacity to host the 2024 Olympic Games, launched by actors suspected of being close to the Azerbaijani regime;
20. Condemns the arbitrary arrests of EU citizens based on spurious accusations of espionage and their disproportionate sentencing;
21. Strongly condemns the public insults and direct threats made by Azerbaijani diplomatic or government representatives, or members of the Azerbaijani Parliament, targeting elected officials of EU Member States; demands, in this regard, that access to EU institutional buildings be denied to the Azerbaijani officials concerned until further notice;
22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the President, Government and Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the President, Government and Parliament of the Republic of Armenia, the Director-General of UNESCO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United Nations and the Council of Europe.