Statement by the spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the Conviction of 14 Peaceful Demonstrators in Azerbaijan

The spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"The High Representative recalls the previous statements made by the EU on the convictions of several participants in the peaceful demonstration of April 2, 2011 in Azerbaijan (on August 26 and October 8), and the repeated expressions of concern by the EU regarding the human rights situation in Azerbaijan in Spring 2011. In spite of these, four more participants in the peaceful demonstrations of April 2011 were convicted on October 10, bringing the total number of convictions to 14.

The High Representative wishes to reiterate the importance the EU attaches to fundamental freedoms, including freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, in its relations with partner countries. These are core values at the heart of the Eastern Partnership and the ongoing negotiation of an Association Agreement with Azerbaijan. The rule of law in the country must ensure that those principles are respected, that court proceedings are free of political interference and that independent lawyers work with no impediments. The High Representative therefore calls on Azerbaijan to provide for a fair and transparent appeal process. The EU is ready to assist Azerbaijan in the implementation of democratic reforms guided by the values of OSCE, the Council of Europe and the EU."

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