



1226th Meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Strasbourg, 29 April 2015

EU Statement on Human Rights in Azerbaijan

The European Union is concerned about the situation of human rights and civil society in Azerbaijan. In particular, we note with dismay recent actions against several human rights defenders, adding to the impression that the authorities are systematically restricting the space for public discourse and civil society in Azerbaijan.

We are concerned about the six and a half year custodial sentence imposed by an Azerbaijan court on Rasul Jafarov, a well-known human rights defender, as well as the seven and a half year sentence imposed on Intigam Aliyev, a prominent human rights lawyer. Procedural shortcomings, witnessed by international monitors during the trials of Mr. Jafarov and Mr. Aliyev, raise due process concerns.

We echo the concerns raised by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, who has continuously stressed the systematic deficiencies in the area of freedom of expression, including judicial harassment of critical voices, and retaliatory measures against those who co-operate with international organisations to promote human rights in the country.

The EU continues to closely follow the cases of Mr Jafarov, Mr. Aliyev, and others, including those of Khadija Ismaylova, and Leyla and Arif Yunus. In this respect, the EU would also like to recall the interim resolution of the Committee of Ministers in regard to the non-execution of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Ilgar Mammadov, in which the Committee of Ministers reiterated with insistence its call to the authorities to ensure without further delay Mr. Mammadov's release.

The EU calls on Azerbaijan to abide by its international commitments, including those in the context of Council of Europe, and to ensure the independence and proper functioning of its judicial system. We look to the authorities in Azerbaijan to ensure that all human rights defenders are given fair legal proceedings and the opportunity to appeal verdicts in a fair and unbiased process.

Azerbaijan is as important partner for the EU and we stand ready to assist the country in its reforms.

The Countries ALBANIA, ICELAND, MONTENEGRO, NORWAY, and THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA align themselves with this statement.