



Plenary sitting

B10-0133/2024

21.10.2024

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 136(2) of the Rules of Procedure

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

**Sergey Lagodinsky, Ville Niinistö, Maria Ohisalo, Catarina Vieira,
Hannah Neumann, Nicolae Ștefănuță, Markéta Gregorová, Michael Bloss,
Alice Kuhnke, Isabella Lövin, Pär Holmgren, Marie Toussaint**
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

B10-0133/2024

European Parliament resolution 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 and Armenia, and in particular its resolution of 25 April 2024 on Azerbaijan, notably the repression of civil society and the cases of Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu and Ilhamiz Guliyev¹,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
 - having regard to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
 - having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights,
 - having regard to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners,
 - having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Azerbaijan, of the other part²,
 - having regard to the statement of 29 May 2024 by the Spokesperson of the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the human rights situation in Azerbaijan,
 - having regard to Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) 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 Rule 136(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Azerbaijan’s track record on human rights has reached a historic low point owing to the fact that, since late 2022, the government has intensified its systematic repression of critics and dissident voices, with a new and ongoing wave of arrests of human rights defenders, political and civic activists, journalists and independent researchers on the basis of politically motivated baseless charges;
- B. whereas the detained journalists and activists listed in its urgency resolution of 25 April 2024 remain in custody;

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2024)0369.

² OJ L 246, 17.9.1999, p. 3, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/1999/614/oj.

- C. whereas these developments are taking place in the lead-up to the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) in Baku, as part of a concerted effort by the Azerbaijani authorities to effectively silence the few remaining dissenting voices and stifle Azerbaijani civil society; whereas Azerbaijan was granted the status of COP29 host city by the UN Regional Group of Eastern European States, which includes 11 EU Member States;
- D. whereas people are being detained for actions such as participating in public protests, giving media interviews, criticising the government on social media, exposing police brutality and alleging government corruption, which is in violation of the Azerbaijani Government's obligations under international human rights law; whereas in addition to politically motivated persecution, the Azerbaijani authorities also use tools of intimidation and harassment to incite fear and effectively censor independent voices;
- E. whereas there are credible reports of severe acts of ill treatment and even of torture inflicted upon detained persons by police officers in Azerbaijan; whereas Azerbaijan refuses to cooperate with the Council of Europe's European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- F. whereas Anar Mammadli, who leads the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center and is a founding member of the Climate Justice Initiative, which seeks to advocate for civic freedoms and environmental justice in conjunction with COP29, was arrested by Azerbaijani authorities on 29 April 2024 on bogus smuggling charges; whereas Mr Mammadli's health has deteriorated significantly while in custody;
- G. whereas researcher and activist Bahruz Samadov was arrested on 21 August 2024 and charged with 'high treason' for his articles criticising Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh policy;
- H. whereas women human rights defenders continue to face threats, coercion, violations of their right to privacy and smear campaigns that are gender-specific and target them as women;
- I. whereas Azerbaijani laws regulating the registration, operation and funding of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are highly restrictive, and Azerbaijani authorities arbitrarily implement these laws; whereas this results in the effective criminalisation of unregistered NGO activity;
- J. whereas civil society activists have been fleeing the country in growing numbers since November 2023; 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;
- K. whereas the media sector is under the official control of the authorities, and any remaining independent media outlets, primarily AbzasMedia and Toplum TV, have been targeted through judicial harassment and the detention of its journalists;
- L. whereas many international and domestic human rights activists and organisations have called on the international community to recognise and respond to the urgency and gravity of the human rights situation in Azerbaijan;

- M. whereas PACE officially suspended the Azerbaijan delegation on 24 January 2024 owing to Azerbaijan's failure to conduct free and fair elections and ensure the separation of powers, the weakness of its legislature vis-à-vis the executive, and the lack of independence of the judiciary and respect for human rights;
- N. whereas a number of European Court of Human Rights decisions have found that Azerbaijan has violated human rights; whereas 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;
- O. whereas the EU has intensified its energy trade relations with Azerbaijan over the past two years with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on a Strategic Partnership in the Field of Energy and more recently an MoU on wind energy cooperation; whereas Commissioner Kadri Simson earlier this year praised the dynamism of the EU's energy cooperation with Azerbaijan;
- P. whereas Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) stipulates that the Union's action must be guided by democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law;
- Q. whereas, separately, peace talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia are ongoing, with both sides stating that negotiations are edging towards a peace agreement; whereas several significant deadlocks seemingly remain, owing to issues including Azerbaijani demands in relation to Armenia's constitution and a corridor to connect mainland Azerbaijan with its Nakhchivan exclave via southern Armenia, disregarding Armenia's sovereignty; whereas earlier this year a deal was signed on a joint border commission to demarcate and delimit their shared border;
1. Reiterates its profound concern regarding the human rights situation in Azerbaijan, in particular the government's severe restrictions on freedoms of expression, assembly and association that have worsened over the past two years;
 2. Is deeply concerned about the systematic repression of freedom of expression by the Azerbaijani authorities, targeting civil society, civic and political activists, journalists and human rights defenders, including acts of harassment, intimidation, arbitrary detention and severe ill treatment and torture by police officers, and politically motivated legal persecution; expresses deep concern about the environment of fear that this has created inside the country, leaving civil society effectively silenced;
 3. Urges the Government of Azerbaijan to immediately and unconditionally release Anar Mammadli, Bahruz Samadov, Igbal Abilov, Farid Mehralizade, Emin Ibrahimov and Famil Khalilov, as well as political prisoners named in previous urgency resolutions, including Ilhamiz Guliyev, Tofiq Yagublu, Akif Gurbanov and Bakhtiyar Hajiyev, and human rights defenders and journalists Ulvi Hasanli, Sevinj Vagifgizi, Nargiz Absalamova, Hafiz Babali, Elnara Gasimova, Aziz Orujov, Rufat Muradli, Avaz Zeynalli, Elnur Shukurov, Alasgar Mammadli and Farid Ismayilov; calls, further, for the vacation of any convictions against those released and the removal of restrictions on

their freedom of movement;

4. Reminds Azerbaijan that the provision of healthcare for prisoners is the responsibility of the state; calls for adequate healthcare and medical treatment to be provided to all those detained in Azerbaijan on politically motivated charges;
5. Urges the Azerbaijani authorities to drop all charges against renowned scholar, anti-corruption activist and shortlisted finalist of the 2024 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu, release him from house arrest, and allow him to travel abroad for urgent medical care without delay and attend the Sakharov Prize ceremony in Strasbourg in December;
6. Is deeply concerned about Azerbaijan's violations of the freedom of association through undue restrictions and misuse of NGO legislation, resulting in the persecution of civil society and curtailing of its work; calls on the Azerbaijani Government to repeal the restrictive NGO and media legislation and ensure that civil society can operate without undue hindrance or fear of reprisals and persecution;
7. Encourages the Commission to review its approach to supporting human rights in Azerbaijan and recommends a reassessment of its funding mechanisms for Azerbaijani independent civil society and media, aligning them more closely with the strategies used to support these sectors in Belarus;
8. Condemns the continued repression of the right to freedom of assembly, for instance in the case of anti-pollution protests in the village of Soyudlu in 2023, which were quashed by security forces using violence and arrests;
9. 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;
10. Calls on the Azerbaijani Government to implement all decisions by the European Court of Human Rights, reminds it of its obligations to respect human dignity and fundamental freedoms and calls on it to repeal repressive legislation on the registration and funding of NGOs, to bring it in line with Venice Commission recommendations;
11. Deeply regrets statements by various Commission representatives, including President Ursula von der Leyen, calling Azerbaijan a 'reliable partner' in the field of energy; insists that, in the interest of its geopolitical security, integrity and pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, the EU end its reliance on fossil-fuel-rich authoritarian countries once and for all;
12. Reiterates its denunciation of Azerbaijan's systematic bribery of European politicians, including in the context of PACE;
13. Considers that the ongoing human rights violations in Azerbaijan are incompatible with the country's role as COP29 host; urges the EU and the Member States to use COP29 as an occasion for the international community to remind Azerbaijan of its international

obligations and to condemn and address in a meaningful way Azerbaijan's human rights violations in interactions with the Azerbaijani authorities in Baku during COP29; calls on delegates attending COP29 on behalf of the EU and the Member States, in particular President Ursula von der Leyen, to make public and private calls for the immediate and unconditional release of arbitrarily detained journalists, activists and human rights defenders and to request meetings with political prisoners while in the country;

14. Stresses the fact that Azerbaijan will host COP29 on behalf of the UN Regional Group of Eastern European States, which includes EU Member States, and that they cannot allow the Azerbaijani Government to use the occasion to whitewash its image and human rights track record; demands that the organisers and the Member States make clear to the Azerbaijani authorities how important a thriving and independent civil society is to the conference's success, and ensure that human rights, fundamental freedoms and the effective participation of civil society are guaranteed during the event;
15. Calls for the EU and the Member States to prioritise, in line with Article 21 TEU, addressing Azerbaijan's appalling human rights situation in their relations with the country and introducing stronger human rights conditions in the EU's relations with Azerbaijan; calls for the EU's economic and political ties with and support for Azerbaijan, including any cooperation on energy, to be made conditional on the release of all political prisoners, reform of laws and regulations governing NGOs and their funding, and the improvement of the overall human rights situation in the country; insists, in this regard, that the EU and the Member States suspend all energy trade relations with Azerbaijan, including the MoU on a Strategic Partnership in the Field of Energy, and make any reinstatement conditional on meeting the above requirements;
16. Calls on the Commission to investigate options for imposing targeted sanctions under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime on those individuals responsible for the grave and consistent human rights violations in Azerbaijan;
17. Welcomes, separately, the ongoing negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan on all pending issues with the aim of concluding a peace treaty, and calls on both parties to remain fully committed to a lasting and peaceful settlement of the long-standing dispute, through dialogue and negotiations; believes that an agreement between these two countries needs to be negotiated in good faith and be based on the recognition of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-use of force; recalls that, meanwhile, all rights of the Armenian minority in Azerbaijan must be safeguarded and calls for all prisoners of war to be released in line with the 1949 Third Geneva Convention;
18. Urges the Commission and the Council to ensure the EU's ability to credibly and effectively continue supporting the negotiations directed at a lasting peace for the benefit of all people in the region;
19. Calls on Türkiye to take more diplomatic responsibility in the region by actively contributing to the promotion of peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and by playing a constructive role in facilitating a lasting and peaceful resolution of the conflict;
20. 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 European External Action Service, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the President and Parliament of Azerbaijan and the President, Prime Minister and Parliament of Armenia.