Resolution on Azerbaijan

2015/2840(RSP) - 10/09/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 365 votes to 202, with 72 abstentions, a resolution on Azerbaijan.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the S&D, ECR, ALDE, GUE/NGL, Greens/EFA and EFDD groups.

Parliament **expressed its serious concern over the continuing deterioration of the human rights situation** in the country. It recalled that the EU attaches special importance to human rights and fundamental freedoms in the context of bilateral cooperation, as key elements of the Eastern Partnership and also as foundational pillars of international organisations such as the Council of Europe and the OCSE, of both of which Azerbaijan is a member.

Members condemned the **unprecedented repression against civil society** in Azerbaijan and called on Azerbaijan to immediately and unconditionally release from jail of all political prisoners, human rights defenders, journalists and other civil society activists, and called for all charges against them to be dropped and for the full restoration of their political and civil rights and public image.

The government of Azerbaijan is called upon to:

- respect and implement its commitments undertaken as a member of the Council of Europe;
- fully cooperate with and implement the recommendations of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission and Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN special procedures in regard to human rights defenders, the rights of freedom of association and peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and arbitrary detention, with the aim of amending its legislation;
- immediately end its crackdown on civil society and human rights work;
- respect freedom of the press and media, both in legislation and in practice and both online and offline;
- stop obstructing and intimidating human rights defenders working for the rights of LGBTI people.

Parliament called on the **Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS)** to:

- strictly apply the '**more for more' principle**, with a specific focus on the situation of human rights defenders, in line with the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders;
- review and suspend temporarily, if needed, **all funding** not related to human rights, civil society and grassroots level people-to-people cooperation granted to Azerbaijan through the European Neighbourhood Instrument;
- **mount a strong and unified response** to the crackdown under way in Azerbaijan, in order to make it clear that the prevailing situation is wholly unacceptable and that it cannot be 'business as usual' until the government releases all those imprisoned on politically motivated charges and ends the ongoing crackdown against independent civil society groups.

More generally, Parliament regretted that the **EU-Azerbaijan human rights dialogue** has not made any substantial progress as regards the human rights situation in the country. The EEAS is called upon to step up this dialogue with a view to making it effective and result-oriented, and to report regularly to Parliament.

Lastly, Parliament recalled its decision to send a European Parliament delegation to Azerbaijan, and stressed the importance of sending this delegation as soon as possible in order to engage with the Azerbaijani authorities on urgent issues such as human rights and the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.