Resolution on the case of Azerbaijani journalist Afgan Mukhtarli

2017/2722(RSP) - 15/06/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the case of Azerbaijani journalist Afgan Mukhtarli.

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

Members recalled that Afgan Mukhtarli, an exiled Azerbaijani investigative journalist who moved to Tbilisi in 2015, disappeared from Tbilisi on 29 May 2017 and resurfaced a few hours later in Baku. According to his lawyer, Afgan Mukhtarli was apprehended by unidentified men who were reportedly wearing Georgian criminal police uniforms, pushed into a car, beaten and driven to the Azerbaijani border, where the sum of EUR 10 000 was allegedly planted on his person.

Afgan Mukhtarli is now facing prosecution for illegally crossing the border, smuggling and violence against police authority and these charges could amount to a prison sentence of several years following his current pre-trial detention.

They recalled that Afgan Mukhtarli worked for several independent media outlets, including Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, and is known for his critical journalistic coverage of the Azerbaijani authorities.

Therefore, the European Parliament condemned the abduction of Afgan Mukhtarli in Tbilisi and his subsequent arbitrary detention in Baku considering this as a serious violation of human rights.

It urged the Georgian authorities to ensure a prompt, thorough, transparent and effective investigation into Afgan Mukhtarli’s forced disappearance.

Freedom of expression: Members strongly condemned the prosecution of Afgan Mukhtarli and called on the Azerbaijani authorities to immediately and unconditionally drop all charges against and release Afgan Mukhtarli.

The resolution called for an immediate, full, transparent, credible and impartial investigation into the death of Azerbaijani blogger and activist Mehman Galandarov while in the custody of the Azerbaijani authorities.

Parliament reiterated its urgent call on the Azerbaijani authorities to end the practices of selective criminal prosecution and imprisonment of journalists, human rights defenders and others who criticise the government, and to ensure that independent civil society groups and activists can **operate without undue hindrance** or **fear of persecution**.

Lastly, Parliament underlined the importance of the **new partnership agreement between the European Union and Azerbaijan** and stressed that democratic reforms, the rule of law, good governance, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms must be at the core of the new agreement.