Resolution on Azerbaijan, notably the case of Mehman Huseynov

2019/2511(RSP) - 17/01/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 533, votes to 28 with 36 abstentions a resolution on Azerbaijan, notably the case of Mehman Huseynov.

The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, Greens/EFA, and EFDD groups.

Parliament called for the **immediate and unconditional release** of Mehman Huseynov, an anti-corruption blogger and director of the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS), who is serving a two-year prison sentence following his conviction on 3 March 2017 for publically complaining about his experiences of ill-treatment and torture by the police, as well as for criticising government officials through exposure of their unexplained wealth. Members noted that Mr Huseynov started a hunger strike on 28 December to protest against attempts to extend his sentence and that he is currently receiving medical assistance. They urged the Azerbaijani authorities to drop all new charges against Mr Huseynov and immediately and unconditionally **release all political prisoners and journalists**.

They also noted that Mr Huseynov's is not an isolated case, with five instances of the authorities pressing new charges against political prisoners whose current prison sentences are shortly coming to an end. The resolution named 11 other human rights defenders and called for charges against them to be dropped. It urged the Council, the Commission and the VP/HR to ensure that the release of Mr Huseynov and all other political prisoners in Azerbaijan **remains a priority in EU-Azerbaijan bilateral relations**.

Members also called on the EU and Member States' delegations in Azerbaijan to redouble their efforts to **support and assist** political prisoners, reporters and bloggers, anti-corruption activists, human rights defenders and members of civil society. They reminded Azerbaijan of its obligations stemming from the European Convention on Human Rights and called on the country's authorities to fully respect and enforce the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights, and the recommendations of the Venice Commission.

Parliament underlined the importance of the **new agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan**, noting that on 11 July 2018 the EU and Azerbaijan finalised their Partnership Priorities, setting the joint policy priorities to guide and enhance the EU-Azerbaijan partnership over the coming years. It stressed that it would closely monitor the situation throughout the negotiations on a new agreement prior to taking the **decision on giving its consent to the agreement**. Members underlined 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.

Lastly, Parliament urged Azerbaijan to fully guarantee freedom of the press and ensure the de facto independence of the Bar Association from the executive.