Resolution on the situation in Azerbaijan

2005/2574(RSP) - 09/06/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted by 78 votes to 2 with 2 abstentions a resolution on Azerbaijan.

The resolution had been tabled by the ALDE, Greens/ALE, EPP-ED, GUE/NGL, PES and IND/DEM groups. It regrets the decision taken by the Mayor of Baku to deny permission for the opposition's rally called for 21 May 2005 to take place, contradicting the spirit of the 12 May 2005 presidential decree which ordered the local administration to authorise political rallies and find appropriate venues for them. Parliament strongly condemns the disproportionate use of force by the police against members of the opposition and youth movement activists exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. It notes that the arrest and detention of opposition activists was politically motivated, and calls for a full investigation into the events, including into the responsibility of the police. EU representatives have expressed their concern about the detention of protesters and opposition leaders while exercising their freedom of assembly, an essential freedom in any democratic society being the freedom to express one's political opinions.

Members strongly condemn the assassination of the journalist Elmar Huseynov in March 2005. They want the authorities to do everything possible to bring the perpetrators to justice, and urge the government to lift the restrictions imposed on the media, to stop the harassment, intimidation and detention of journalists who dare to criticise the government and to protect the personal safety and professional integrity of journalists performing their duties. Parliament also expresses concern about the lack of independence of the judiciary, noting also the conclusions of the OSCE report on trial monitoring in Azerbaijan which show that in some important respects trials fell well short of Azerbaijan’s existing legal requirements and its international commitments on human rights and the rule of law. It calls on the authorities to take steps to remedy the deficiencies observed in trials and urges the government, in this regard, to implement the Council of Europe recommendations on the treatment of political prisoners following extensive and credible allegations of torture and ill-treatment.

Parliament calls for the following:

- the government to ensure that the forthcoming parliamentary elections in November 2005 will be free and fair and that opposition activists and candidates do not suffer repression in any shape or form;
- renewed efforts from all sides in the round-table discussions between the ruling party and the opposition parties, which are aimed at strengthening confidence in the electoral process and minimising the risk of fraud;
- a sufficient number of international observers to be deployed in the country for the elections, including a delegation from the European Parliament.