

AZƏRBAYCAN RESPUBLİKASININ
ATƏT YANINDA
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OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN
TO THE OSCE

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STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

948th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council April 18, 2013

in response to US Delegation on Free Thought University

The US statement covers a whole range of issues; I will not dwell upon all of them at this stage. We reserve our right to come back to some of those points during the future meetings. For initial stage I grouped the issues raised by the US delegation:.

First one is on the issue of the Free Thought University. As an initial response to the statement made by the distinguished Delegation of the United States I would like to note that the information raised by the US Delegation has been officially disclaimed by the relevant authorities of our Government.

In this regard I would like to refer to the official press release of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the issue and I quote:

“Information disseminated in the media on the suspension of the activities of the “Free Thought University” by the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan does not reflect the reality.

Recent investigations conducted by the relevant department of the General Prosecutor's Office with regard to the cases of engagement of organizations “Nida” and “Ol” in an unauthorized demonstration and illegal activities, among others revealed the fact that the founders of the organization “Ol” and the “Free Thought University” are same persons. Initial investigation of the activities of the “Free Thought University” also indicated a number of violations of the law.

Moreover, it was determined that the “Ol” contrary to the national legislation did not fulfill the requirements for the state registration, did not provide relevant reports on its activities and funds received from foreign organizations to the appropriate state bodies during the period of its activities.

On the basis of the court decision the General Prosecutor's Office seized the documents related to the activity of the “Free Thought University”, other important materials from the Office of this organization for determination of the legitimacy of its activities, destinations

of expenditures from the foreign funds, as well as other details. Further in accordance with the relevant court decision the Ministry for Finance launched the audit of the University.

Currently the investigation is carried out and additional information will be provided in due course.”

At this initial stage, we hope that this information clarifies the concerns of the US Delegation.

Next point: We appreciate the comments with regard to the partnership between the US and Azerbaijan, although they do not cover all aspects. Relations between the USA and Azerbaijan are based on mutual respect and common values. Achievements that Azerbaijan has made also realized through cooperation with the OSCE and the United States as a co-chair of the Minsk Group.

With regard to the issue on the reaction of the Government of Azerbaijan to “protesters this year, including the arrest and pressure on civil society organizations” I would like to note that similar restrictive norms with regard to the unauthorized demonstrations and violations of legislation are exercised in every normal society. Every right is not absolute, and if one goes beyond those rights, and cause damage to public order, there are certain legal mechanisms to be used. The same mechanism is also used in the USA with regard to the unauthorized demonstrations and illegal activities. Another point, I would like to touch upon and I quote “the United States urges the Government of Azerbaijan to uphold to its international commitments and obligations to ensure that its citizens’ universal freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression are respected and protected”. As this notion is every general I would request the US delegation to specify on which occasion Azerbaijan breached its commitments. If it is so we can discuss this issue, as we did before. If it is just a general indication of the trend I encourage the US delegation to specify it.

Next point is on the value of assistance provided to Azerbaijan by the OSCE Office. We also value the assistance provided by the OSCE Office in Baku. And now that assistance reached the point that it requires reconsideration with regard to current realities and the due respect to the host nation consent which is so popular here in the OSCE, including for the US delegation. No state can impose the longer presence of the OSCE field mission without host nation consent. In this regard I would encourage the US delegation to discuss this issue in the appropriate format, such as the Informal Working Group which was established with the aim of transformation of the OSCE Office in Baku to the Project Coordinator.

On the issue of the invitation of the ODIHR to observe the presidential elections; we will come back to this issue at a proper later stage.

Thank you.