



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 941 Vienna, 14 February 2013

EU statement on the Human Rights situation in Azerbaijan

The EU recalls the joint statement issued on 9 February 2013 on behalf of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton, and the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, regarding the arrests of the deputy chairman of Azerbaijan's largest opposition party "Musavat", Mr. Tofiq Yagublu, and Mr. Ilgar Mammadov, leader of the Republican Alternative Movement and Presidential candidate nominee, on 4 February 2013, and the subsequent decision to hold them in pre-trial detention for a period of two months. The EU joins others in expressing concern regarding these arrests and urges Azerbaijan to release immediately the two opposition figures. We also urge Azerbaijan to ensure a speedy, fair, transparent and independent investigation of the charges.

We call on Azerbaijan to review urgently the charges imposed against individuals who took part in a peaceful demonstration on 26 January in Baku and to ensure that existing allegations of ill-treatment of detainees participating in that demonstration and earlier protests in Ismayilli are thoroughly investigated

The EU is also concerned about the arrests of two political activists, Mr Javid Nabiyev and Mrs Gunay Ismayilova, on 12 February in the city of Khachmaz where they were scheduled to conduct a civil society training for the Election Monitoring and Democracy Study Centre, a project funded jointly by the EU and the National Endowment for Democracy. While these individuals have now been released, we call on Azerbaijan to provide the Permanent Council with detailed information on this worrying incident.

The European Union is also deeply concerned by recent threats against the writer Mr. Akram Aylisli and members of his family. Recalling OSCE commitments with regard to Fundamental Freedoms, including Freedom of Expression, we urge the Azerbaijani authorities to ensure that the personal safety of Mr. Aylisli and his family is protected and that measures taken against them are retracted.

In light of the upcoming Presidential elections in October, Azerbaijan has an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to improve the country's record on democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights, independent justice and the rule of law. Azerbaijan has clearly and freely agreed to abide by OSCE commitments and has also undertaken commitments in the framework of its relationship with the EU through the Action Plan of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in the Eastern Partnership. We urge Azerbaijan to enable an open political space for a meaningful dialogue in the country that includes diverging views

and to refrain from obstructing the legitimate activities of journalists, political activists and potential presidential candidates.

In this context, the European Union reiterates its support to the OSCE office in Baku in its active role to bring attention to fundamental rights and freedoms in Azerbaijan, especially in the run up to the forthcoming presidential elections. We would like to encourage the Azerbaijani government to engage closely with the OSCE especially ODIHR to provide for a transparent and objective election monitoring process throughout the electoral cycle.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Iceland+ and, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.