



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU statement on human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law in Azerbaijan

The European Union continues to closely monitor the situation of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law in Azerbaijan.

Recalling EU statements on freedom of assembly, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law delivered at the Permanent Council lately, as well as the two statements by the spokesperson of EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton, issued on 8 and 12 October 2011, we reiterate our deep concern about the recent sentencing of eight more persons who had participated in the peaceful demonstration of 2 April 2011.

In a judgement pronounced on 3 October 2011, prison terms of two and a half years were given to Arif Hajili, the secretary general of the Musavat Party, Tural Abbasli, the president of the Musavat Youth Organization and Mohammed Majidli, a director at the Popular Front Party. A fourth person, Fuad Gahramanli, the vice-president of the Popular Front Party, received a suspended sentence of one year and eleven months imprisonment. In another judgement, pronounced on 10 October, Ahad Mammadov and Rufat Hajibeyli, both vice-presidents of the Musavat Youth Organization, were sentenced to three and to one and a half years in prison, respectively. Elnur Majidli, an activist of the Popular Front Party,

was sentenced to a two year and Ulvi Guliyev, another participant in the 2nd April demonstrations, to a three year prison term.

According to international observers the trials were characterised by serious irregularities as to the judicial process. The EU considers that these convictions are a discouraging signal and not consistent with Azerbaijan's efforts to progress toward a pluralistic democracy, which must be based on the full respect and guarantee of fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression and assembly.

The EU calls on the judiciary in Azerbaijan to ensure a fair, transparent and evidence-based appeal process. In this context, we also express concern about the increasingly challenging working environment for independent lawyers.

As pointed out in the 8 October 2011 statement by the spokesperson of the EU High Representative, the EU Delegation in Baku has been instructed to closely monitor further developments on this issue. In the same vein, we call on the OSCE Office in Baku to pay particular attention to this matter and inform the participating States accordingly.

Finally, stressing that full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law is at the heart of the OSCE commitments, as well as of the framework for co-operation within the Eastern Partnership, we remain committed to assisting Azerbaijan in fulfilling its respective commitments, particularly those assumed within the OSCE framework.

The candidate countries CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND**, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, the European Free Trade Association country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

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

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