

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1048  
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**EU Statement on Human Rights in Azerbaijan**

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The European Union is concerned about the situation of human rights and civil society in Azerbaijan. In particular, we note with dismay recent actions against several human rights defenders, adding to the impression that the authorities are systematically restricting the space for public discourse and civil society in Azerbaijan. Most recently, we are concerned about the six and a half year custodial sentence imposed by an Azerbaijan court on Rasul Jafarov, a well-known human rights defender and respected partner of international donors, as well as the seven and a half year sentence imposed yesterday on Intigam Aliyev, a prominent human rights lawyer. Also, procedural shortcomings, witnessed by international monitors during the trials of Mr. Jafarov and Mr. Aliyev, raise due process concerns.

We echo what the Representative on the Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatovic, already stated on the case of Mr. Jafarov: “Jafarov’s sentencing is nothing short of an act of injustice and it adds to the growing number of journalists and free expression advocates serving time in Azerbaijan prisons for their work. This systematic and wide-scale persecution of independent voices in Azerbaijan is a clear violation of the fundamental and basic human right of freedom of expression”.

The EU continues to closely follow the cases of Mr Jafarov, Mr. Aliyev, and others, including those of Khadija Ismaylova, and Leyla and Arif Yunus. The EU calls on Azerbaijan to abide by its international commitments, including OSCE commitments, and to ensure the independence and proper functioning of its judicial system. We look to the authorities in Azerbaijan to ensure that all human rights defenders are given fair legal proceedings and the opportunity to appeal verdicts in a fair and unbiased process.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA\*, and the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania 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.