

The OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM), 2018

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Warsaw, Poland

Monday, 17 September 2018

Working session 10: Fundamental freedoms

Including:

- freedom of expression,
- freedom of peaceful assembly and association,
- national human rights institutions and the role of civil society in the protection of human rights,
- freedom of movement

FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms is a one of the key principles of democratic states, moreover it is essential for ensuring peace and security, as well as for preventing conflicts in the entire OSCE region. People should be able to exercise their rights and freedoms at all times, including in times of conflict, irrespective of their place of residence, status, political or other views. Lasting peace and security is achievable only if fundamental freedoms, human rights and democratic principles are ensured, and I believe that mutual respect and recognition of human rights is the only path to peaceful resolution of conflicts, including the conflict between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh.

In the context of conflict situations and conflict resolution, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all can contribute, inter alia, to developing specific mechanisms and instruments for the peaceful resolution of those conflicts, and civil society on both sides, as the most active part of society, should be able to play a positive role in achieving this goal. This in turn implies that participating States should create the necessary conditions for the free and creative activity of civil society organizations both within the country and in the framework of international and regional projects and peace initiatives.

Unfortunately, the deteriorating situation and the constantly shrinking space for civil society in Azerbaijan poses a serious challenge to such perspectives, limiting the opportunities for dialogue and contacts between representatives of civil society from all sides of the conflict.

It is truly unfortunate that those few in Azerbaijan who advocate peace and reconciliation between the two peoples find themselves under the risk of being imprisoned on various trumped-up charges or forced to leave the country for security reasons. This has been the case with prominent Azerbaijani journalist Rauf Mirkadirov, as well as human rights activists Leyla

and Arif Yunus who fled Azerbaijan and have been granted political asylum in European countries.

To conclude, I would like to make some recommendations.

To participating States and OSCE institutions:

- Take necessary and adequate measures to ensure the safety of journalists, human rights activists and representatives civil society involved in peace initiatives;
- Promote and facilitate contacts and inclusive dialogue between journalists and civil society representatives representing all parties to conflict;

To the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media:

- Consider inviting to its freedom of expression and media freedom events participants from all parties to conflict in a status-neutral manner.