



29 June 2010

STATEMENT

Council of Europe: Human Rights Organisations Welcome PACE Resolution on Azerbaijan, Call for Sustained Monitoring Efforts

On 24 June, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted Resolution 1750 on the functioning of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan. ARTICLE 19, the Human Rights House Foundation, the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee welcome the adoption of the resolution. We call upon the Azerbaijani government to implement the recommendations contained in the resolution, and urge PACE to sustain its efforts to monitor the human rights situation in Azerbaijan.

We, the undersigning organisations which took part in a 21-24 June delegation to the Council of Europe, note our concern regarding the serious and widespread human rights violations that persist in Azerbaijan nearly ten years after the country's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). As highlighted in the report debated in the 24 June PACE session, Document 12270, the rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association are particularly restricted in Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijani elections have consistently failed to meet European standards for fair and free elections.

We fully support the recommendations contained in the resolution and draw particular attention to those recommendations related to freedom of expression and electoral reform. We call upon the Azerbaijani government to implement these recommendations and to take every necessary measure to ensure that November's parliamentary elections meet European standards for fair and free elections. In particular, we urge the Azerbaijan government to comply with the European Court of Human Rights' ruling on Editor-In-Chief Eynulla Fatullayev's case, including by immediately releasing him from prison. We also urge the Azerbaijani authorities to conduct a new, more thorough and objective investigation into the convictions of bloggers Adnan Hajizade and Emin Abdullayev, who are internationally recognised as prisoners of conscience.

ARTICLE 19, the Human Rights House Foundation, the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee call upon PACE to sustain its monitoring efforts on Azerbaijan, particularly through its Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe. We encourage the new co-rapporteurs on Azerbaijan, Joseph Debono Grech and Pedro

Agramunt Font De Mora, to take their mandate seriously, monitor the country's adherence to current Council of Europe standards, and sustain the current level of reporting on Azerbaijan's legal obligations under the ECHR. The government of Azerbaijan should continue to be held to account in accordance with its commitments as a fully fledged member of the Council of Europe.

Notes to Editors:

- The full text of PACE Resolution 1750 is available at <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta10/ERES1750.htm>. The report debated in the 24 June PACE session, Document 12270, is available at <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc10/EDOC12270.htm>.
- For a fuller description of our concerns regarding the human rights situation in Azerbaijan, please see our joint statement at <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/press/a-common-statement-on-human-rights-in-azerbaijan.pdf>.
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