

From the Council of Europe Chairmanship to the European Games

A year of human rights violations in Azerbaijan

Event at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Tuesday, 23 June 2015, 13:00–14:00

Room 5, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg

Event with the exhibition of People in Need
on detained civil society leaders in Azerbaijan

Speakers:

Dinara Yunus

Daughter of detained human rights defenders Leyla and Arif Yunus

Dominika Bychawska-Siniarska

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

Giorgi Gogia

Human Rights Watch

John Dalhuisen

Amnesty International

Kenan Aliyev

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

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Recent years brought an intensified crackdown on the exercise of fundamental human rights in Azerbaijan that has shocked even seasoned observers. Without any regard for protections under domestic or international law, the authorities in Azerbaijan have targeted journalists, political opposition leaders, grassroots activists, and human rights defenders, including lawyers. Central to the government's strategy to suppress criticism is the employment of politically motivated criminal prosecutions and detentions. It has also amended laws regulating NGOs, making it extremely difficult for them to receive foreign funding.

One year ago President Ilham Aliyev of the Republic of Azerbaijan addressed PACE. He denied the country had human rights problems and strenuously denied anyone was in prison on politically motivated charges. Today, the crackdown that had wracked Azerbaijan's civil society when President Aliyev made his speech has reached unprecedented levels.

During its June session, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe should clearly denounce such moves as they contradict values of the Council of Europe, the obligations of all Council of Europe members under European human rights law, and the commitments that Azerbaijani freely took upon itself when it became a member of the Council of Europe.

This event will shine light on the repression and imprisonment of civil society, of which the first European Olympic Games, hosted by Azerbaijan in June 2015, were a sad symbol.

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Refreshments will be provided

Organised by Amnesty International, Human Rights House Network, Human Rights Watch, International Media Support and People in Need

Co-sponsored by Article 19, Committee to Protect Journalists, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Freedom Now, Index of Censorship, International Partnership for Human Rights, Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (joint programme of FIDH and OMCT) and PEN American