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Protection of independent experts co-operating with the Council of Europe

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Mr Pieter OMTZIGT and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

One of the challenges currently facing the Council of Europe is to develop participatory democracy on a pan-European basis through inter alia strengthening NGOs and civil society which increase the impact of citizens' action.

The Council of Europe itself benefits from the contacts with NGO's. Meanwhile, efficient communication with independent experts becomes essential, particularly from the standpoint of having a multi-dimensional flow of information. Only objective, unbiased information can provide a basis for the smooth and targeted activities of the Organisation.

In June 2014, on the sidelines of the Parliamentary Assembly 3rd part-session, Azerbaijani human rights activist Rasul Jafarov presented to the Assembly a report on human rights violations in Azerbaijan. Together with several independent organisations, R. Jafarov had been compiling a comprehensive list of victims of politically motivated arrests in Azerbaijan, which he planned to submit to the Assembly. After Mr Jafarov's return to Azerbaijan he was arrested on charges which lack credibility.

Another human rights defender, a prominent lawyer, Intigam Aliyev, was also arrested right after the meeting in the Parliamentary Assembly where he criticised the authorities of Azerbaijan for their poor human rights record and shrinking space for independent NGOs. It is evident that the charges against Mr Jafarov and Mr Aliyev relate to their human rights activities as it was recognised in the statement made by European Union High representative Ashton and Commissioner Füle in August 2014. These activities include also their expert opinion provided to the Assembly.

It becomes urgent that Azerbaijan must respect fundamental freedoms and refrain from persecutions of experts expressing their opinion at the Assembly and other bodies of the Council of Europe, which differs from the official position of that member State. In addition, the Assembly should discuss the possibility of the creation of appropriate mechanisms to safeguard free expression of opinion in the Organisation by invited experts.

Signed (see overleaf)



*Signed*¹:

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1. EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group
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