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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Protecting human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Ms Mailis REPS and other members of the Assembly

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

The Parliamentary Assembly is seriously concerned about cases of intimidation of and reprisals against human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States (such as killings, attacks on their physical and psychological integrity, arbitrary arrests, judicial and administrative harassment or defamation campaigns). It has followed their situation since 2006 and its latest report dated 8 December 2015 (and Resolution 2095 (2016)) shows that there had been an increase in such cases in certain member States. In Azerbaijan, some activists have been arbitrarily arrested and even convicted and sentenced to long prison terms. Similar things happened in Turkey, where among others a prominent Kurdish lawyer, Mr. Tahir Elçi, was assassinated in November 2015. In Russia, NGOs receiving foreign funds are labelled as "foreign agents" and many human rights defenders are subjected to judicial harassment or smear campaigns. All over Europe, activists working on sensitive issues, such as the rights of minorities, the fight against corruption or impunity of State officials, are harassed by the authorities or the media. Moreover, the previously reported murders of human rights defenders had not been properly investigated.

While the UN has a reporting mechanism and the EU provides substantive financial aid to numerous human rights activists, the Council of Europe lacks a unified and efficient mechanism of protection of human rights defenders, many of whom are its long-standing partners and provide invaluable information about the human rights situation in their countries. Unfortunately, some of them – for example, Intigam Aliyev, Khadiya Ismayilova and Rasul Jafarov from Azerbaijan – have been sentenced to long prison terms and remain in jail.

Therefore, the Assembly should remain seized of this issue, react to cases of persecution and intimidation of human rights defenders and explore further avenues to enhance their protection within the member States and the Council of Europe.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EC: European Conservatives Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group
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