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Support for the independent civil society of Azerbaijan

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Jason AZZOPARDI and other members of the Assembly

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

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Azerbaijani independent civil society has been largely marginalised in the wake of the nationwide crackdown in 2014 and years to follow. Most of the surviving organisations have been forced out of Azerbaijan and continue their activity from abroad. Very few are still in Azerbaijan working against the odds, through persecutions and frozen assets, to defend fundamental freedoms and challenge corruption. Further complicating their work is the fact that the European Union and the Council of Europe has stopped all funding for the independent civil society and has instead financed the pro-government organisations known as GONGOs.

The funds from the Council of Europe and the European Union are used by the GONGOs and government agencies for projects and programs that do nothing to help the Azerbaijani civil society or its people.

The pressing issues right now are the need for reform inside the country and the shrinking space of the independent civil society. Azerbaijani independent NGOs who fled the country due to the worsening working conditions of human rights defenders and journalists should be eligible to receive the resources from the Council of Europe and the European Union. In order to carry out a concerted action, independent civil society organisations and media that still operate on the ground should also benefit from these funds.

The Parliamentary Assembly should work with and ensure funding for independent civil society in its 2018-2021 action plan, even for those based outside the country.

The Assembly should also investigate thoroughly the organisations they attribute funds to in order to avoid financing the GONGOs that will only do the government's bidding under the pretext of civil society work.

The Assembly should also follow up more on how the funds released through the 2014-2017 action plan were used and make sure there are tangible results from the implemented programs and projects.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group