



Doc. 15521
02 May 2022

Threats to life and safety of journalists and human rights defenders in Azerbaijan

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Mr Christophe LACROIX and other members of the Assembly

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

The growing level of violence in Azerbaijan, intolerance and ongoing threats against Azerbaijani journalists, bloggers and human rights activists is cause for great concern.

On 22 February 2022, a journalist and human rights defender, well-known LGBT activist, Avaz Shikhmammadov (a.k.a Avaz Hafizli), was killed at home. Numerous requests to protect his life were ignored by Azerbaijan's law enforcement agencies.

On 23 April 2022, a well-known blogger and human rights activist, former prisoner of conscience, outspoken critic of the authorities, Bakhtiyar Hajiyev was abducted by masked individuals, who tortured and subjected him to inhuman treatment, including urinating on him, while filming it. They ordered the blogger to remove his critical publications. After Hajiyev deleted them, he was released and warned that his non-compliance may lead to him being raped and killed.

Over the past two months, many investigative journalists received warnings from Azerbaijani intelligence services' representatives to stop anti-corruption investigations against government officials. Otherwise, journalists were threatened with death and serious health problems looking like accidents or poisoning. After these threats, some of these journalists were forced to announce the termination of anti-corruption investigations, whereas some still decided to continue their work.

The Parliamentary Assembly should carefully consider and study the existing cases of murders and assassination attempts, ongoing threats to life and freedom of Azerbaijani journalists, bloggers, and human rights activists, who continue to work in the country and abroad, and prepare a comprehensive report on this issue.

The Assembly should call on the Azerbaijani Government to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights and guarantee the safety of journalists and human rights activists, allowing them to continue professional activities unhindered.

Signed (see overleaf)



*Signed*¹:

LACROIX Christophe, Belgium, SOC
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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EC/DA: European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left