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The need to investigate politically motivated persecution in Azerbaijan

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Ms Sibel ARSLAN and other members of the Assembly

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

The intensification of repression against Azerbaijani journalists, trade union activists, environmental defenders, opposition figures and prisoners of conscience since the beginning of 2023 is concerning. Notably, in the previous 12 months, the number of political prisoners in Azerbaijan has doubled from 99 to more than 200 people.

The crackdown on civil society in Azerbaijan is more obvious than ever, while reprisals and political persecution by the government remain key instruments for intimidating and silencing critical voices. The government is infamous for the use of fabricated criminal charges and torture against political prisoners.

The arbitrary detention of a prominent anti-corruption expert, well-known economist, and oppositional movement leader Gubad Ibadoghlu, whose health condition is deteriorating day by day is particularly disturbing. Another outrageous case of politically motivated arrest is the detention of the Harvard University alumni, Bakhtiyar Hajiyev, who was taken into custody in December 2022 on trumped-up charges simply for co-operating with the European Endowment for Democracy, the grants of which he used to promote the Council of Europe's values of human rights and democracy in Azerbaijan. Some government critics, namely Rashad Ramazanov, Avaz Zeynalli, and Bakhtiyar Hajiyev, face the revolving prison door concept, being forced to serve illegal sentences repeatedly.

The Parliamentary Assembly should appoint a rapporteur who will investigate the growing problem of political prisoners and acts of intimidation committed by the government of Azerbaijan, which shall result in a comprehensive report.

The Assembly should urge the Azerbaijani authorities to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights and cease human rights violations, as well as to promptly and unconditionally release all political prisoners.

Signed (see overleaf)



*Signed*¹:

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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