

QUARTERLY REPORT

ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

IN AZERBAIJAN

April-June 2017 by Election Monitoring and Democracy
Studies Centre

SUMMARY

This report is prepared by Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre (EMDS) and aims at raising awareness on the situation of human rights in Azerbaijan and their promotion.

The organization received reports on 102 violations of human rights grouped under 9 categories during April-June 2017. Information on violations was collected based on reports received from citizens and monitoring of media. All received information has been verified.

The organization received reports from 17 regions across the country. Most of reports were received from large cities like Baku and Ganja, along with Goychay and Beylagan.

Main trends of human rights violations recorded during the second quarter of this year are following:

- Social and economic rights violations constituted majority of received reports similar to previous quarter. These included failure of providing social protection and other services by local executive authorities.

- Violations of freedom of expression increased in comparison with previous quarter. Situation of free speech have dramatically deteriorated during the period with blocking of main independent news websites, abduction of a journalist living in neighboring Georgia, detention and imprisonment of journalists and activists.

- Violation of right to fair trial continued during this quarter with blatant breach of due process and procedural requirements in trials of politically motivated cases and violations of people's rights in administrative courts.

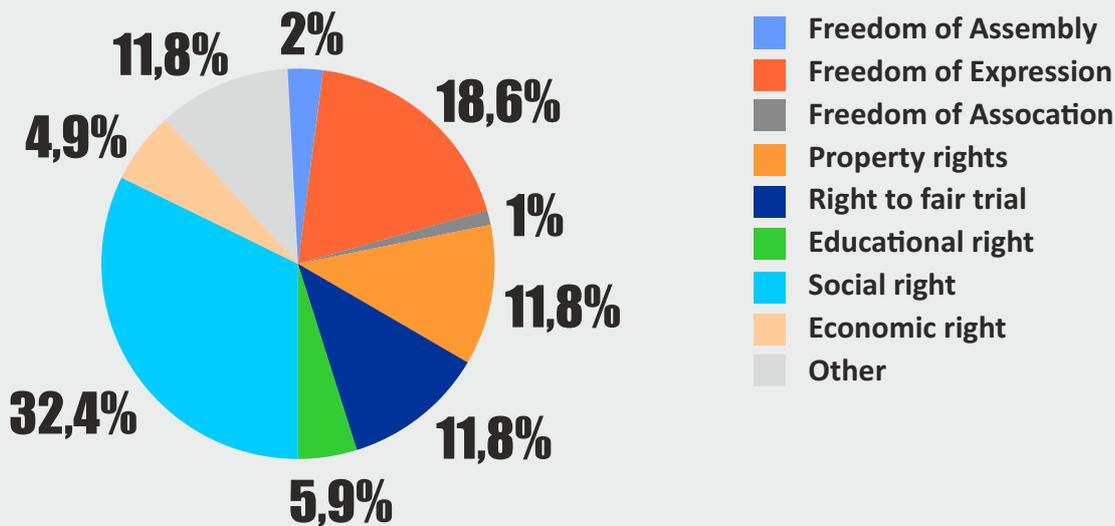
- Property rights were violated across the country. These included eviction of people from their houses in connection with demolition works in Baku and regions. Citizens reported growing number of cases when local executive authorities illegally infringed rights of farmers and Small and Medium Enterprises in regions outside of the capital.

GOAL AND METHODOLOGY

By monitoring of and reporting on the human rights violations, EMDS aims at improving the situation of human rights and freedoms in Azerbaijan.

The organization received information on violations through monitoring of media, human rights organizations, political parties and individual human rights activists and through reports submitted to the Gozetcı.az website by citizens across the country. It should be noted that the document does not encompass information on all violations of human rights in the country. In order to have more detailed information on each case of violation, please visit www.gozetcı.az website or contact us at info@smdtaz.org

CATEGORIES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS



a) Violation of social rights

Social rights were the most violated and constituted to a third of all violations reported during this quarter. These violations included cases related to property rights, living conditions of citizens, corruption, pensions and benefits, social protection, and actions of local officials.

The category also had the highest rate of positive solution. 15 of 33 reported violations were partially or fully solved during the reporting period.

b) Violation of political freedoms

Politically motivated persecutions and violations of political rights increased during April-June. Political activist Mehman Galandarov was found dead in detention facility no. 1 on 29 April committing a suicide according to official statement. Galandarov was arrested on 7 February on charged of drug possession and sentenced to three month of pre-trial detention. Prior to his arrest, he planned to organize lone protest demonstration. A criminal investigation was opened related to his death, but there has been no development since.

Opposition members faced pressure and harassment prior to and after the 8 April rally organized by the National Council of Democratic Forces – an opposition group. Party members were summoned to police and intimidated, while 16 members of Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (APFP) were fired from their jobs due to their political affiliation.

Deputy chair of APFP Gozal Bayramli was detained at the border on her way from Georgia to Azerbaijan and

arrested on charges of smuggling. She is accused of attempting to smuggle 12,000 USD without declaration and was sentenced to three months of pre-trial detention. Another party activist Fuad Ahmadli, who was arrested last year in summer, was sentenced to four years in prison for bogus charges of abuse of official power and violation of operative-search legislation.

Freedom of expression has reached new low during the reporting period after court blocked access to four news websites on 12 May. Three main independent news websites – Meydan TV, Berlin-based online news outlet, Azerbaijani desk of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Azadliq newspaper, along with Azerbaijani Hour and Turan TV were blocked due to content “threatening national security”.

Violation of freedom of speech also increased during the reporting period. Journalist Nijat Amiraslanov was detained for his critical Facebook post and sentenced to 30 days of administrative detention on bogus charges of resisting police. He was subjected to mistreatment during the detention.

Another journalist Afgan Mukhtarli was abducted from Georgia, where he was living in exile with his family, and illegally brought to Baku by Azerbaijani authorities. He was subsequently charged with illegal border crossing and smuggling, and sentenced to three months of pre-trial detention. He was tortured and beaten during his abduction and detention.

Editor-in-chief of Kanal 13 (Channel 13), an internet TV, Aziz Orujov was sentenced to 30 days of administrative detention, and later was charged with illegal entrepreneurship and abuse of official power on the day he was set to be released. He was sentenced to four months of pre-trial detention.