

RESOLUTION

Of Participants of Public Forum on Situation of Political Freedoms in Azerbaijan organized by the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre (EMDS)

Forum participants discussed current situation of freedom of expression and media, political control over the internet, electronic and print media, limitations to activity of public unions, civic groups and political parties, difficulties created by laws regulating activity of these structures, including Election Code and law on Freedom of Assembly.

During discussions thoughts on constraints concerned with ensuring of socio-political activity opportunities, pressure on political activists, detaining and arrest of citizens concerned with political motives, along with release of political prisoners were shared.

Along with the aforementioned Forum participants

- Referring to the international legal acts the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party to, political rights and liberties enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including freedom of assembly and association and right to fair trial,
- Condemning attacks on independent media including independent journalists – Avaz Zeynalli, Aydin Janiyev and Anar Bayramov,
- Taking into account the fact that, balanced and pluralist broadcast is not provided by TV channels, including approach of Public TV, which is contrary to the principle of political pluralism,
- Taking into account the problems occurred in the sphere of protection of political liberties after the 2010 parliamentary elections held not in accordance with the international standards on free and fair elections;
- Being concerned of more than 60 people still being arrested for political reasons and pressure on political activists;
- Being concerned of political constraints on activity of public unions, civic groups and political parties, along with difficulties caused by law on Non-Governmental Organizations (Public Unions and Foundations, Election Code, law on Freedom of Assembly and changes and amendments suggested to law on Political Parties;
- Supporting calls of local and international human rights organizations on liquidation of pressure related to political activity and release of political prisoners;

Determine the following:

- Authorities shall carry out its political responsibility by strictly fulfilling its obligations in line with the Constitution of Azerbaijan, Universal Declaration of Human Rights of UN, OSCE Helsinki Final Act and Copenhagen Document, European Convention on Human Rights.
- Calls of local and international human rights organizations, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and European Union on release of persons arrested with political motives shall be taken into account.
- Operation of all TV and radio channels operating in the country in line with law on Television and Radio Broadcast shall be ensured, particularly the operation of Public TV, which is the member of European Broadcast Union, in line with political pluralism principles shall be guaranteed, law on Defamation shall be adopted and release of imprisoned journalists shall be ensured.
- Actions toward upgrade of electoral experience and legislation shall be carried out by taking recommendations and documents of OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Venice Commission of the Council of Europe and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on upgrade of Elections Code of Azerbaijan, along with experience of judgments of European Court of Human Rights on electoral violations in Azerbaijan into account.
- Law on Freedom of Assembly shall be upgraded and constraints on conduct of peaceful protests shall be removed.
- Harrassment of political party activists shall stop, public discussions on changes and amendments to law on Political Parties shall be held and opinion of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe on this shall be taken into account.
- Authorities shall take steps creating conditions for dialogue with local human rights defenders, civil society organizations and political parties on protection of political liberties;
- Attacks on local and international organizations protecting political liberties and local and foreign media covering problems in this sphere shall be stopped;

Baku, 29 February 2012