

Speech at Council of Europe on Azerbaijan

24.06.2015



On 23 June 2015 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe debated a report of the Monitoring Committee about the functioning of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan. The country is a member state since 2001. With its accession to the organisation and by signing several of its conventions the country committed itself to respect fundamental democratic rights. As the report shows democratic rights like freedom of speech, of media and association are not well respected in Azerbaijan. Especially the repression of regime critics and dissidents is a matter of concern.

Please find here the [adopted resolution on Azerbaijan](#) [2].

Please find here the speech of Marieluise Beck:

We really need to give thought, again and again, to just why the Council of Europe exists. Let us not forget that the countries that have joined the Council of Europe joined on a voluntary basis. No one forces a country to join. Any country that joins signs up to a series of basic principles: complying with the pillars of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Let us be clear that this is never perfect but, if you join the Council of Europe, you are undertaking a commitment to embark on this path and comply with these principles. Whatever you carry out in your country should be in line with these principles.

When I went to Azerbaijan a few years ago, it was easy for me to meet up with young, active people who belonged to NGOs and human rights bodies. There was really not that much fear at that time. Unfortunately, the situation has got a lot worse. It is not only the issue of whether there are political prisoners or not, how many there are and whether they can, indeed, be seen as political prisoners; it is clear that in Azerbaijan currently, the civil society that is championing democracy and human rights is very afraid, which should be of great concern to us all. This cannot be justified by stating that the country is under a great deal of pressure and

stress because of conflicts. We cannot use that stress to justify the fact that the principles of the rule of law and human rights are not being fully complied with.

We only have one means of saying things in the Parliamentary Assembly: making our voices heard, and saying things clearly and loudly. We mentioned the name Magnitsky a few years ago in the Parliamentary Assembly. He was an imprisoned Russian. We could not do anything to save him, even though we shouted his name loudly. He died in prison. If we do not do anything about the serious situation of the married couple who have been imprisoned in Azerbaijan, I certainly hope that we do not find ourselves in a similar situation.

We want to do everything we can to ensure that people who are in a precarious situation ? who have been imprisoned and are defending human rights ? can be properly saved. Therefore, I call on all our colleagues from Azerbaijan, who are here on a voluntary basis and of their own free will to do everything in their power to ensure that they take us seriously. Otherwise, there is no point in us meeting here any more.

Kategorie:

English ^[3]

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