

Catherine Ashton,
Vice-President, European Commission,
and High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, European Council
Štefan Füle
European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy
Martin Schulz, President, European Parliament
Ministers of Foreign Affairs, EU member states

Brussels, 17 December 2013

Statement of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on arrest by Azerbaijan authorities of Anar Mammadli, who led election monitoring of Presidential elections in Azerbaijan. Anar Mammadli is a former Working Group 1 Co-ordinator of Civil Society Forum

Arrest of Anar Mammadli shows disregard of Azerbaijan authorities for independent election monitoring and civil liberties. Civil Society Forum calls on Azerbaijan authorities to release him immediately.

Dear High Representative, Dear Commissioner, Dear President of the European Parliament, Dear Ministers,

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum protests strongly about the three months' detention order imposed on Anar Mammadli, the head of the Election Monitoring and Democratic Studies Center (EMDS) in Azerbaijan, and his subsequent imprisonment on 16 December 2013. The investigation being carried out against Anar Mammadli does not warrant his detention as he has until now answered every summons to appear as a witness in the case, and the fact that he has had his passport taken away means that he is unable to leave Azerbaijan. Prior to October 2013, Anar Mammadli was Working Group 1 co-ordinator of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (working group for democracy, human rights, good governance, and stability).

Anar Mammadli is a highly respected civil rights activist, and the reports produced by his election monitoring organisation are considered to be highly credible both in Azerbaijan and abroad. We consider that the criminal investigation being conducted against him which derives from grants EMDS received from abroad to conduct its election monitoring activities is another example of the victimisation of civil rights activists by the Azerbaijan authorities.

We urge the authorities to immediately free Anar Mammadli, and to drop all charges against him. The authorities must understand that every additional political prisoner in Azerbaijan undermines the country's image abroad and its position in the Council of Europe and in the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe as well as its relations with the European Union.

We urge the European Commission, the EU delegation in Baku, and the European Parliament to condemn his arrest in the strongest terms, and to support the Civil Society Forum in pressing the Azerbaijan authorities for his immediate release.

Yours faithfully,

Steering Committee
Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership