

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

Anne Brasseur, President of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

19 March 2014

Statement of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

Extended arrest of Anar Mammadli, internationally respected monitor of elections, shows contempt for freedom of expression and breaches international commitments of Azerbaijan

Dear High Representative, Dear Commissioner, Dear President of the European Parliament, Dear Ministers, Dear President of Parliamentary Assembly, Dear President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum firmly condemns the extension for another three months of the arrest of Anar Mammadli, Chair of the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre (EMDS). On 14 March 2014, the Baku Court of Appeal dismissed the complaint filed by Anar Mammadli against the extension of his arrest for another three months. He was arrested on 16 December 2013. 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).

The Civil Society Forum considers the allegations of tax evasion and illegal business levelled against Anar Mammadli as completely unfounded. He has until now answered every summons to appear as a witness in the case, and the fact that his passport had already been taken away meant that he was unable to leave the country. The politically driven investigation commenced two weeks after the Azerbaijani Presidential elections of 9 October 2013 following the attention drawn by EMDS to the fact that the elections failed to meet international standards for free and fair elections.

The Civil Society Forum urges the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to denounce the persistent breaches of fundamental human rights and freedoms by the authorities in Azerbaijan, and to urge the Government of Azerbaijan to comply with its international commitments to human rights and civil liberties as a member of the Council of Europe.

Anar Mammadli is a highly respected civil society activist, and the reports produced by EMDS are considered highly credible in Azerbaijan and abroad.

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum urges the government to stop any actions towards the limitation of alternative viewpoints and freedom of expression and association, and urge the authorities to release Anar Mammadli immediately, and to drop all charges against him. The government must understand that every additional political prisoner in Azerbaijan undermines the country's image abroad and its position in the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and weakens the country's relations with the democratic world.

We, representatives of civil society, urge the European Commission, the EU delegation in Baku, Members of the European Parliament, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to condemn his arrest in the strongest terms, and to support the Civil Society Forum in pressing the Azerbaijani authorities for his immediate release.

Yours faithfully,
Steering Committee
Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership